a lover's guide to Warangal

THE *Kridabhiramamu*
BY VINUKONDA VALLABHARAYA

A medieval Telugu parodic verse-play translated by

Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman

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The **Kridabhiramamu** *of Vinukonda Vallabharaya occupies a unique place in the history of South Indian literature. Composed as a one-act play in Telugu verse in the early fifteenth century, it offers a parodic vision of the Kakatiya capital of Warangal as reimagined by a poet living far to the south, in Mopuru, some hundred years after the destruction of the Kakatiya city by the Tughluks.*

The poet unfolds a remarkably realistic and highly eroticized panorama of life in the alleys and streets of Warangal as the hero of his text, Govinda Mancana Sarma, moves through the city in search of his former lover. A series of rich lyrical vignettes brings to life images of basket-weavers, peasants, seductive whores and madams, pole-dancers, snake-charmers, folk singers, cock-fights, ram-fights, dice games, and other components of a social universe usually not documented in medieval Indian texts. At the same time, this parodic reality is radically transformed in highly unusual ways.

The translators' introduction analyses this transformation and suggests an interpretation of the text that links it to notions of carnival and ritual inversion, while insisting on the distinctiveness and radical nature of the process embodied here. A new theory of carnival transformations is set forth, partly in relation to the medieval Sanskrit genre of **bhana**, *which offers somewhat similar, though less far-reaching, effects.*

Since the rediscovery of the **Kridabhiramamu** *at the beginning of the twentieth century, the book has been the subject of intense controversy among Telugu scholars and critics, some of whom attacked it as obscene. The translators discuss this controversy and suggest a new way of closely reading the text in the light of the vibrant literary milieu in which it was composed.*

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The Krīḍâbhirāmamu

by

VINUKŎṆḌA VALLABHARĀYA

Translated by

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&

With an Afterword by Phillip B. Wagoner

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In memory of
Manavalli Ramakrishnakavi (1866–1957)
pioneering scholar,
saviour of lost books

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Note on Transliteration

Long vowels, marked by a macron, are double the length of the short vowels.

Sanskrit diphthongs (*e*, *o*, *ai*, *au*) are always long. We mark the contrasting Dravidian short *ĕ* and *ŏ*.

ṭ ṭh ḍ ḍh and *ṇ* are retroflex, pronounced by turning the tip of the tongue back toward the palate.

ñ is a palatal nasal, *ṅ* a velar nasal.

ṃ followed by a sibilant or h is pronounced as in French nasalized vowels.

There are three different sibilants: ś, palatized; ṣ, retroflex; and s, dental.

Unvoiced plosives marked with a line underneath are optionally voiced in recitation (Telugu orthography systematically replaces them with their voiced counterparts).

Introduction

1. Vallabhararāya and His Text

Krīḍâbhirāmamu is a parodic work in Telugu poetry by Vinukŏṇḍa Vallabharāya, a poet of the first half of the fifteenth century.[1] It presents itself as a Telugu version of a Sanskrit original, the *Premâbhirāma*, by Rāvipāṭi Tripurântaka, also known as Rāvipāṭi Tippanna: but no such work has survived, and we cannot be certain that this Sanskrit prototype ever existed. A later poet, Mariṅganṭi Siṅgarâcārya,[2] is said to have composed a *dvipada* version of this same Sanskrit text, but this version is also unavailable to us. If indeed such a Sanskrit text existed, as the Telugu scholarly world believes, it would be akin to those works known to us as *bhāṇa*—short one-act plays, usually combining gross eroticism, comedy of various forms, and a certain degree of realistic description. All of these features are present in the Telugu text presented here.

This text survived in a unique and partly damaged manuscript discovered by Manavalli Ramakrishnakavi, an unusually adventurous but not widely known Telugu scholar, in 1909, in the Sarasvati Mahal library at Tanjavur. The manuscript is a palm-leaf copy commisioned by Rājaśrīpaṇḍita (Rāmayya) Varāhappaya Dīkṣitulu, the librarian and minister of

[1] For the family genealogy of Vallabharāya and the question of his date in relation to the rule of Harihara II of Vijayanagara (1377–1404), apparently in his father's generation, see our notes to the introductory section of the text.

[2] See Bommakanti Venkata Singaracarya's introduction to his edition of the text (with Balantrapu Nalinikanta Ravu), *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* (2nd edition, Vijayavada: Emesco, 1991), lxvii.

the famous Maratha kings Sarabhojī and Śivājī II, *circa* 1856. Ramakrishnakavi first published the work, with a preface setting out certain of the major problems relating to its classification, authorship, and cultural role. It has since been republished several times, the best edition being that of Bommakanti Venkata Singaracarya and Balantrapu Nalinikanta Rao (1972), which we have used for our translation.

Already in the seventeenth century, the famous poetician Appakavi quotes a verse (86) from the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, which he attributes, however, to the great poet Śrīnātha.[3] This attribution also turns up in citations from our text in metrical works.[4] As a result, ever since the publication of the text by Ramakrishnakavi, controvery has raged over the identity of the author. Wild fantasy scenarios have emerged describing how Śrīnātha and Vallabharāya might have met, and how the younger poet, Vallabharāya, might have shown his imperfect manuscript to the great master, who then supposedly 'improved' it, adding his own verses. What is clear is that there are strong stylistic affinities between the highly individual style of Śrīnātha and Vallabharāya's book, and frequently we find entire phrases and parts of verses lifted verbatim from Śrīnātha's works. So close a stylistic similarity implies the existence of a single poetic universe, which both authors inhabit. More specifically, we will argue below that Vallabharāya constitutes a kind of limit, and parodic fixing, of Śrīnātha's literary mode.

The *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* defines itself as belonging to the genre of *vīthi*, 'street-play,' one of the ten dramatic forms defined by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* textbook of dramaturgy. *Vīthi* has one or two characters and is mainly erotic in theme.[5] The popular tradition which connects our work with Śrīnātha usually refers to it as a *vīthi-nāṭakamu*, literally a drama performed in the street. It would, however, be more accurate to describe the

[3] He refers to the text not as *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* but as *vīthi-nāṭakamu*: *Appa kavīyamu* 3.139. See below.

[4] E.g. Kūcimañci Veṅkatarāyuḍu, *Sukavimanorañjanamu* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, 1976), 3.242; Kūcimañci Timmakavi, *Lakṣaṇa-sārasaṅgrahamu* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, 1971), 1.166 and 2.276.

[5] See *Nātya-śāstra* 20.112–13. Note that the popular name for the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* in medieval metrical works is *vīthi-nāṭakamu*.

Krīḍâbhirāmamu as a play, seemingly intended for performance, but partially transformed into a *kāvya*—a poetic text meant to be read (aloud). The entire introductory section, giving details of the author and his lineage, as well as the concluding colophon, support this view.

The action unfolds in the Kākatīya capital-city Warangal (Orugallu, Sanskrit Ekaśilā-nagaram, also known as Āndhra-nagaram, 'Telugu City') in the northern Deccan, some 120 kilometers north-east of Hyderabad. If Vallabharāya's dates are correct, this will be a retrospective vision of Warangal from a point approximately a century after its destruction by the Delhi Sultans and the extinction of the Kākatīya dynasty. Clearly, Warangal maintained a major symbolic presence in the imagination of Telugu poets, even after its fall. At its height it was one of the great cities of the world, rich in monuments such as the famous Svayambhū-Śiva temple (whose gateways still survive in place today).[6] The Kākatīya period (eleventh to early fourteenth centuries) was one of far-reaching cultural and institutional innovation in the eastern Deccan, especially under the leadership of the later Kākatīya kings (Gaṇapatideva, Rudramma Devi, and Pratāparudra) ruling from their astonishingly sophisticated capital.[7] Vallabharāya offers a rather precise, guided tour of this remembered city, beginning from a point outside the first of its two encircling walls, proceeding through the red-light district, and ending in the high-class neighborhood, probably in the city center, where the hero meets his lover.

Vallabharāya describes himself as the ruler of the village of Mopūru in Mulkināḍu, in present-day Kadapa District, though his ancestors came from Vinukŏṇḍa in Guntur, in eastern, deltaic 'Andhra. His god was Bhairava-Śiva, whose temple was on a hillside in Mulkināḍu—as we

[6] See the essay appended to this volume by Phillip Wagoner on the spatial organization of Kākatīya Warangal.

[7] See now the excellent study by Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Āndhra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Marco Polo refers to Rudramma Devi and the diamonds of Kākatīya Telangana in the 'kingdom of Mutfili' (= Motupalle): *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, translated and edited by Colonel Henry Yule (London: John Murray, 1871), 2: 295–7.

know from the concluding benediction as well as from a lost verse from our text preserved in Pĕdapāṭi Jagannātha-kavi's *Prabandha-ratnâkaramu*.[8] Bandaru Tammayya, who produced one edition of *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, believed that the text may have been performed at this god's festival in Mopūru.[9] We have no evidence for this possibility, but it is important to note that a major node in the play deals with another festival setting, that of the god Āndhra Viṣṇu at Śrīkākuḷam (Kṛṣṇa District). Such festivals—*tirunāḷḷu*—were certainly the performance setting for apparently antinomian texts such as the Sanskrit *bhāṇas* mentioned earlier. There is thus some reason to explore those aspects of this text which could be called 'carnivalesque'—assuming a highly specific notion of carnival, to be outlined below.

This introduction will deal with the following main topics: the literary structure of the text, including, in particular, its hyper-realism; its place in the wider literary tradition of medieval Telugu, including the special form of parody that it presents; and the implications of these features for a new theory of carnival, in a south Indian cultural world.

2. On Incongruity

In its barest skeleton, the play describes a slowly materializing rendezvous between the beautiful Kāma-mañjari and her lover, the Brahmin playboy Govinda Mañcana Śarma. It begins with a cryptic love-letter sent by Kāma-mañjari to the latter and concludes with their reunion. On the way, the young Brahmin walks through the city of Warangal with his companion, the merchant Ṭiṭṭibha Sĕṭṭi, who is also the main internal audience for Mañcana's lyrical monologues. Before the happy conclusion, Ṭiṭṭibha is also fixed up with a girl, for whose services, however, he has to pay.

[8] An anthology of selections from Telugu kāvya texts, edited by Korlapāṭi Śrīrāmamurti (Visakhapatnam: Andhra University, 1992); see Bandaru Tammayya, introduction to *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* (Madras: Vavilla Ramasvamisastrulu and Sons, 1953), 18.

[9] Ibid.

It all takes a single day, from sunrise to midnight. One could also describe this progression as one from a cold, wintry dawn through the heat of the day to a warm moonlit night, with a woman by the hero's side. An acute awareness of the passage of time is evident throughout, and there is even a verse devoted specifically to a chiming clock which indicates midday. A similar precise awareness applies to space, as the two friends wander through Orugallu/Warangal, avoiding the main streets—where apparently nothing of great interest happens—but observing with striking realistic detail all the life of the sidestreets and alleys. They move from the periphery, outside the city walls, through the main gate, and then, via a series of local quarters and cross-streets, to the red-light district. Many of the scenes described are of low-caste milieux—the bamboo-basket weaver and the oil-monger, the polluted bazaar (*maila-santa*) where dipilatory cream is sold, a menstruating Untouchable woman on her way to bathe, gamblers, tailors, de-lousers, and so on. Moreover, the great majority of these tableux are explicitly, even outrageously, erotic: Warangal is a city of love and sexual pleasure, openly pursued and displayed.

It is also a city of many temples (and Buddhist *vihāras* and even a mosque, 'where Allah lives'), and, along with the exact enumeration and spatial localization of this ritual and cultic universe, there is a certain seriousness with which the deities and their devotees are mentioned and addressed. The somewhat distant Svayambhū-Śiva temple hovers over a religious reality which is varied, flamboyant, and remarkably alive. Hook-swinging, fire-walking, epic-singing, and similar 'popular' forms are meticulously described. The Kākatīya goddess Ekavīrâmba-Reṇukā and her counterpart, Māhuramma, occupy a central role. Local deities, such as the Palnāḍu heroes and Mailāru-deva, receive detailed descriptions in the heart of the text. In some sense, this ritual world of song, melodramatic vows, and ecstatic devotion is intricately and integrally linked to the bawdy eroticism of the main narrative line, as seen through the eyes of a lover, Mañcana Śarma. This linkage needs to be carefully defined.

At first glance, we seem to be in a very unusual poetic domain, where graphic realism, of a type hardly known in other Indian texts, dominates the tone. A closer look may reveal a deeper mechanism, in which realistic detail feeds into a systematic form of parodic distortion. Take an example. In the late afternoon, the two friends come upon a crowd absorbed in watching cock-fights:

> They seem to be of the species of Coconut Cranes—these fierce roosters that stretch their necks, flap their wings, and scratch the ground with their feet as they cry, 'Ko Ko Ko'. Proud; with bright eyes, like stars, red at the corners. Strutting, glaring at one another, pouncing angrily, flying up, tearing into each other's chest with the knives tied to their feet, pushing and poking, tasting the sharp taste of blood that flows from their wounds into their mouths, gurgling from their throats in fury, extending their wings left and right to hit one another while parrying the opponent's blows, then surreptitiously crawling under the other's feet to lacerate his cheeks with their steely beaks, holding the enemy's head down to the ground so he cannot move, tearing open each other's belly with the crooked knives on their toes: they fight like Vāli and Sugrīva, like Vinda and Anuvinda, like Kṛṣṇa and Cāṇūra in sole combat. Cāraṇas, Gandharvas, Vidyādhararas, Garuḍas, all praise their valor. They are committed to battle until at last they fall, each by himself, in the arena, soaked in blood, losing consciousness.

> Alas! Second vehicle for the god Kumāra! Lord of mantras!
> You who possess the great wisdom of ripening time.
> You feast on food offered to the spirits. You made it possible for Indra to fuck Ahalyā. Blind with passion yourself, you force yourself on your mate.
> Full of unbridled ego—bugles announcing the triumph of desire—
> killed in battle, you roosters are on your way to heaven.
> Will you also make love to Rambhā, Tilotttamā, and Menakā,
> the gods' own women, you little chickens? [235–6]

We could hardly ask for a more precise and vivid picture of cock-fights in the city streets. The author is describing something that he knows first-hand and reports with scrupulous attention to detail. The texture of the prose-passage is at first intensely realistic, the images almost palpable. At the same time, these rather concrete and vivid images are soon projected onto a ridiculously elevated mythic register: the cocks are

like the god Krishna fighting the wrestler Cāṇūra, or the monkeys Vālin and Sugrīva of the *Rāmāyaṇa*—almost as if a modern sports commentator were describing a local Little League baseball match in terms of Achilles' feud against Hektor. Moreover, this description is immediately followed by a hilarious parodic verse comprising a long set of high-flown vocatives addressed to the dead or dying cocks, who are now on their way to a heroes' heaven where the courtesans of the gods are waiting to make love with them. Further mythological allusions enhance the irony enveloping these 'little chickens': they have helped Indra in his liaison with Ahalyā; they serve as Kumāra's vehicle. Even more comically elevated is the long Sanskrit epithet *kāla-vijñāna-pāka-kovidulāra*, 'you who possess the great wisdom of ripening time'—as evidenced by the cock-crow at daybreak. This is a realism of the surface which opens up a deeper level rife with ironic disjunction. The more magniloquent the imagery, the cruder the subject.

Very often this juxtaposition of grandiose diction and the coarse object of attention tends to the obscene, as in the following advertisement for a depilatory available in the market:

> Like the smooth back of Lord Viṣṇu when he became a tortoise.
> Like the clean-shaven head of the first Jina, who emerged at the start of time.
> Like a copper pot upside-down, washed clean and burnished to a sheen.
> Like the smooth high forehead of the Brahmin,
> after he has applied Ganges mud and washed it away.
> As beautiful as it used to be at the first menstruation.
> Just apply that *susarabhet*, and the house of love is revived. (80)

The poet begins with Lord Viṣṇu, proceeds via the ascetic founder of Jainism, and then moves into the Brahminical ritual domain of copper pots and forehead dots. His scope is seemingly universal and ludicrously inappropriate. An extraordinary elegance and dignity permeate the language of this poem. One could almost be describing a great king on his throne. Indeed, this sense of a noble subject is powerfully maintained

right through the verse until the last line, which brings us crashing down to earth. This is parody taken to a playful extreme, richly condensed in a style at once lyrical and grotesque.

In fact, the association with kingship arises naturally within the text itself. The courtesan Mācaldevi, favored by the great king Pratāpa Rudra, merits a hyperbolic description in terms usually reserved for the sacred Vedic texts: 'Whose house is this? It's the epitome of festivity,' Mañcana asks the people around (staring at the sky).

> 'Have you come from outer space? O Brahmin: may all evil
> be contained. She is famous all over the world
> as the great preceptor of love as laid down
> in the Vedic Science of Desire. She won the highest respect
> of the assembly of scholars, presided over
> by the King himself, Pratāpa-rudra. Don't you recognize
> this Mācaldevi, the well-known whore?' [180]

Sumano-bāṇâsanâmnāya-vidyopādhyāyi: Mācaldevi is 'the great preceptor of love as laid down in the Vedic Science of Desire.' Love is *āmnāya*, a sacred corpus, embodied in this woman, whose true professional identity is given only as the final word of this verse, *vārâṅgana*—a whore. The author teases us, tantalizing us with prestigious, heavily Sanskritic vocabulary for the entire course of the verse, before leaving us in the bordello. Once you have read the verse through to the end and discovered its true subject, a second reading reveals the extent of parodic masking. Elevated phrases such as that just cited now assume a violently incongruous role, and the gap between object and epithet looms large.

Nonetheless, the text presents us with a wealth of lucid and realistic details drawn from the life of the city streets—so lucid that modern critics misunderstood this work as representing a kind of social realism. According to Bommakanti Venkata Siṅgarâcārya, the editor, *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, unlike all other classical Telugu works, 'represents the true, realistic life of the people of that period,'[10] though in a critical (satirical) mode. Ever since the discovery of the poem by Ramakrishnakavi, the Telugu literary world has debated with much passion the question of

[10] Bommakanti Venkata Singaracarya, Introduction, xi.

quality: is *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* to be praised for its social realism or condemned for its immoral subject? Powerful voices spoke for condemnation: one of the learned editors of the text, Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, actually declared it to be obscene. Despite such opinions, something about the book must have appealed to all of these engaged critics, as the very intensity of the discussion shows. Yet both sides to this debate have completely failed to perceive the nature of the book.

The conjunction of the highly prestigious or auspicious with the crude and obscene is a consistent feature of this text. But we can push this pattern further in the direction of a systematic form of inversion. Mañcana Sarma is drawn into a ceremony performed for a young girl in the bordello: for a courtesan-to-be, the first life-cycle ritual, analogous to the rituals at first menstruation for a family girl, is 'looking in the mirror.' The atmosphere in the bordello is charged, as at any ritual context, so Mañcana Śarma asks:

> 'All the relatives are here. Is it a ritual occasion,
> or pilgrimage to a temple, or a festival?
> What are we celebrating in our house?'
> 'Yes,' she says, 'it is a celebration, my celibate friend:
> Today, in the early afternoon, under the auspicious star
> of Puṣya, your dear daughter will look in the mirror.
>
> You must chant the blessings for your daughter at that time,
> so that she has long life, beauty, wisdom, skill, and splendor.
> Without beginning with the ritual of looking in the mirror,
> no courtesan can take a customer.
> Can a Brahmin start a sacrifice
> without first rubbing the firesticks?
>
> For us who live on our looks, the mirror
> is the Goddess of Luck.
> After all, all doctrines of illusion
> take the mirror as proof.'

Mañcana Śarma has discovered a daughter perhaps not his own—and is in time to perform her ceremony. It is an auspicious and serious occasion, to be performed at the proper astrological moment (*muhūrta*), and it

marks a transition in the life of the young courtesan. Listen to the analogy: looking in the mirror is like rubbing the *araṇi* firesticks as the beginning of a Brahminical sacrifice. Nothing could be more respectable than the firesticks, so the comparison is deliberately atrocious, meant to shock. To drive home the point, the Madam adds a small philosophical touch, linking her whores with the standard Advaitic image of the mirror: for the philosophers, the mirror suggests, in its purity and clarity, the true nature of awareness; for a courtesan, the mirror is the Goddess of Wealth. Part of the irony of the comparison lies in its being true. Parody habitually works with a double code—the lampooned object that is at the same time parodoxically affirmed.[11]

Still, there is a clear direction to the subversion enacted in this passage: the whore is systematically juxtaposed with, or explained by, images drawn from Vedic lore, Sanskrit texts, and high ritual contexts. When a whore is mentioned or described, the Upaniṣads cannot be far behind.[12] On the other hand, when non-veśyās, that is housewives or family women, are described, the direction is reversed: the erotic, even pornographic tone implicitly reduces them to whores.

> In front of that house,
>
> Like the wild lovemaking the texts call 'mortar and pestle,'
> with the woman on top, her hair dancing
> on her back, sumptuous breasts swinging,
> she squats on her haunches, grinding turmeric
> into paste, glass bangles on both her arms
> ringing in perfect harmony. [110]

Similarly with the oil-monger (102–4), the delouser (108), the peasant girl shaping cowdung balls (82), and so on. The life of the streets in Warangal, seen through the eyes of the two strolling visitors, is one of

[11] See V. Narayana Rao, D. Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamil Nadu* (Delhi: Oxfrod University Press, 1992), 21; Lionel Duisit, *Satire, parodie, calembour: Esquisse d'une théorie des modes dévalués* (Stanford: SUP, 1978).

[12] See verse 90.

riotous sexuality that energizes the two patterns of inversion we have defined. Each type of woman, seen alone in her own terms, is entirely routine: a pornographic whore is no great discovery, nor, perhaps, is a peasant girl shaping cowdung into balls. But when each transgresses her natural world and is brought into relation with a contrasting domain—the whore becoming sacred, the housewife a whore—their presence is energized, alive, compelling, and in some sense creative. We will return to this theme.

Note that there is a convergence in the two patterns at the culmination of the text, when Mañcana Śarma at last achieves his rendezvous with Kāma-mañjari. By her name, and in relation to the utterly promiscuous hero, Kāma-mañjari should be assimilated to the courtesan. In fact, however, she is a family woman who therefore has to hide her liaison (under the pretext of worshiping at the temple!). She comes dressed as a devotee to meet her lover under the full moon. But having reunited with him, she is at first concerned mainly with pairing his companion, Ṭiṭṭibha, with a whore. The final verse brings together both couples—the illicit lovers, Mañcana and Kāma-mañjari, and the not-so-illicit customer with his whore—in a hymn of praise to the moon uttered by the former within earshot of the latter. The illicit lovers—referred to, now ironically, as 'this whoring couple'—frame the creative combination of opposites at its point of full maturity. The world has been changed: the magic of the moonlight suffuses the texture of this gentle and evocative verse, still erotic but no longer parodic. The jarring disjunctions, although they survive in a formal way, have fused into a homogenous harmony. The housewife who has achieved the intense erotic aliveness of the illegitimate, and the whore-to-be who is momentarily a newly deflowered housewife, cancel out their own negations and enter a new, shared state.

3. Inset: Beyond the *Bhāṇa*

This culmination, rich in implication, emerges from a process that has an organic and cumulating logic. In fact, the entire nature of the text is strikingly processual. Something is slowly being transformed in the course

of the protagonists' movement through time and space. The temporal dimension—a single day from sunrise to moonrise—suits the ritual quality of this progression. But even more evocative is the movement through space, which takes us from a point outside the town into its center: stated abstractly, the peripheries are closing in on this center, which opens up or unfolds as a result. Outside the city there are low-caste housewives, all described in a language more suited to whores. Once we are inside the main gate, courtesans appear, and language soars to sacred heights; 'realistic' city scenes also come into play—cock-fights, ram-fights, snake-charmers, a pole-vaunter—as do reports of popular rituals, almost anthropologically described. At the same time, we find ourselves moving toward the core area of the great temples such as Svayambhū-Śiva; but the same direction takes us to the great establishment of Mācaldevi, the royal courtesan. Deeper and deeper inwards: from here Mañcana Śarma makes his way to the house of a whore he has known, where the mirror-ceremony is on; and it is here, as he holds hands with his old flame, that he describes at some length the exuberant festival (*tirunāḷḷu*) at Śrīkākuḷam for the god Kākuḷeśvara-Viṣṇu, the Telugu King (*tĕlugu-bharta*). This vivid inset takes us, for a critical moment, still deeper into a bounded antinomian mode, keyed as a temple ritual.

During the *tirunāḷḷu*, the god himself is the supreme playboy: *jāra-cora-mahā-dhūrta-cakravarti*, 'the emperor of adulterers, thieves, and scoundrels' (205). He is also a 'good customer of the gods' whores.' He is in love with a Brahmin girl and has clearly shed all inhibitions, so much so that the Vedas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads, and Āgamas—that is all conceivable sacred or semi-sacred texts—have been emptied of vitality. No rules apply. God himself has permitted men to sleep with others' wives. Moreover, the major focus is on the starved sexuality of widows, normally denied sexual experience. All this takes place within strictly defined boundaries of time and space—from the moment the flag is raised on the pole in the temple until the concluding chant, and within the area of twelve *krośas* around Śrīkākuḷam on the banks of the Kṛṣṇā River. Within these limits, everything is permissible, to the full extent of the erotic imagination. But it is precisely these temporal and spatial limits that

provide a telling contrast with what Mañcana Śarma and his friend are experiencing in Warangal. There—in the city, as we explore it in verse after verse—sexuality has no clear constraints beyond which 'normalcy' should reappear.

In other terms, we could say that the Śrīkākuḷam inset embodies a typically homeostatic ritual of reversal: borders have presence and meaning, as does the radical breaching of these borders in the direction of a temporary sensual profusion. Violation feeds off a logic of the liminal. Reversals of this sort recall the Bakhtinian carnival, which is also an example of what Don Handelman has called 'bottom-up play'—antinomian expansion from below, perhaps undermining, for a while, the norms threatened by these disorderly and playful moves.[13] The ultimate effect, however, may well be the rearticulation of normative behavior. In this sense, the Śrīkākuḷam verses of the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* are reminiscent of the productive medieval *bhāṇas*—highly ritualized 'tours' of various sites, usually at a moment of antinomian erotic release. Such texts tend to be antinomian within a clear nomian frame, as are the rituals they embody or describe. But the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* offers a different perspective, a second-order parody, reframing and opening up the first-level parody of the *bhāṇa* type. Here, in the streets of Warangal, normative reality is a surface phenomenon that is capable of unfolding into higher, more intense, more harmonious, more creative modes. Violation alone cannot produce this effect.

We can draw in the contrast more starkly by comparing our text to a representative Sanskrit *bhāṇa*—the *Śṛṅgāra-śekhara-bhāṇa* by Vellāla Umāmaheśvaruḍu (also known as Abhinava Kālidāsa, perhaps roughly contemporaneous with Vallabharārāya).[14] We need to recognize first

[13] See Don Handelman, 'Passages to Play: Paradox and Process,' *Play and Culture* 1992, 5, 1–19; M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968).

[14] The text has been edited by B. Ramaraju (Hyderabad: 'Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, 1969). There is much confusion about the author's date; Ramaraju cites the view expressed by M. Krishnamachariyar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 506, placing the poet approximately in the eleventh century and the Chola country. This is almost certainly off by several centuries.

that *bhāṇas*, though always heavily erotic in tone and given to premeditated violation of social norms, fall into two major categories. The earlier, 'classical' *bhāṇas*, best known from the so-called *Catur-bhāṇī* quartet, are brilliant compositions for performance by a single actor on stage who converses with many different characters offstage, in prose and verse. They usually describe their rakish hero's progress through his city on a mission of making peace between two lovers, probably a courtesan and a high-caste merchant, or some similar scenario; in the course of this urban adventure, the hero meets exotic characters such as gamblers, hermaphrodites, the old Madams of the bordello, newly destitute lovers and habitués of the ever-present courtesans, and so on. Lewd banter, couched in a rather classical idiom familiar from the *Kāma-sūtra* and its tradition, dominates the scene. These are urban texts, highly sophisticated, directly linked to the world of the *kathā* story-genre with its beautiful courtesans, their ugly and manipulative mothers, and rich merchants' sons.[15] Very different in tone are the later medieval *bhāṇas* of a ritual type almost invariably associated with a temple and some publicly performed sequence of inversion, violation, and reversion to the norm. Such compositions, many dozens of which have survived, can justifiably be called carnivalesque; yet they tend to have a predictable, almost routine theme or set of themes, which rarely rise to the poetic heights of the classical *bhāṇas*. The real life of the medieval *bhāṇa* must have been located in its performance in the context of a temporally structured temple ritual.[16] Thus in our example by Umāmaheśvaruḍu, the context for performance is the Spring Festival (*vasanta-yatrotsava*) for

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Ramaraju himself prefers a date in the second half of the thirteenth century. Firm evidence is lacking, but even this dating is definitely too early. The *Śṛngāra-śekhara-bhāṇa* belongs firmly in the late-medieval *bhāṇa* type, and its Telugu author seems to inhabit a semantic universe close to Vallabharāya's.

[15] On *bhāṇa* generally, see S. S. Janaki, 'Le piu recenti composizioni teatrali di tipo *bhāṇa*,' *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, II Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche et Filologiche 107 (1973), 459–90.

[16] For a somewhat similar (*yakṣa-gāna*) text from the eighteenth-century, performed at a festival in Mannārkuṭi in the Tamil region, see the *Sati-dāna-śūramu* of

Śiva-Kāmakoṭi-vallabha in Kāñcipuram. Within this frame, the hero, Śṛṅgāra-śekhara—Prince of Love—follows a course that is remarkably close to Mañcana Śarma's in the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, taking him through the town of Kāñcipuram with seductive, sometimes outrageous sights and sounds in the course of a day which will culminate in the Mirror-Ceremony of the young courtesan Utpala-mālā.

In terms of the sequential arrangement of scenes and themes, the *Śṛṅgāra-śekhara-bhāṇa* shows a superficial similarity to *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*. We are treated to descriptions of cock-fights, gambling, the mirror-ceremony, a lovers' court, and the concluding benedictory description of moonrise. Such elements were clearly part of a shared generic syntax, which Vallabharāya inherited. But unlike the *bhāṇa* authors, who usually reproduced this syntax in relatively banal fashion, Vallabhararāya plays off it, extending its expressivity through subtle ironies and heightened incongruities. Look, for example, at the Sanskrit *bhāṇa's* description of the ram-fight in the streets of Kāñcipuram:

viṣānâgra-krīḍā-viśakalita-kālâyasa-dalair
mukhair īṣat-sācī-karaṇa-kuṭilair udbhaṭa-saṭāḥ /
gatāḥ paścād etya prasabha-militā meṣa-patayaḥ
prahārān anyonyam vidadhati śirobhiḥ paṭuravaiḥ // (55)

Sharp iron tips on their horns,
their faces slightly turned aside,
these shaggy rams retreat, approach, collide,
pound one another head-on
with fearsome sounds.

We can grant Umāmaheśvaruḍu a certain predictable realism, but not much more. This battle of rams is like every other such moment in the *bhāṇa* literature. In contrast, Vallabharāya's rams are playing a somewhat self-consciously ironic game: they are the central actors in a 'dice-game played with living dice' (*sa-jīva-dyūtamu*). Already this initial phrase, and the powerful prose-passage in which it is embedded, reframe

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Shāhājī, translated in our *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology* (Berkeley and Delhi: University of California Press and Oxford University Press, 2002).

the set piece of the ram-fight, simultaneously elevating it to the level of a major, even mythic battle and re-imagining it as somehow ludicrous—without at any moment losing the semantics of realistic description. Like the *bhāṇa's* rams, Vallabharāya's paw and pace:

> Each ram is certain in its heart
> of victory, and totally unafraid.
> Facing each other, they first step back a few paces,
> then smash into each other.
> These rams are no small things. [228]

Although lexically continuous with the *bhāṇa's* mode of description, the verse culminates in a phrase itself pregnant with ironic perspective. The rams (*urabhramul*) are *a-dabhramulu*, 'not small.' In fact, they are about to be compared to various purāṇic images that completely transform the scene into a comic self-parody, phrased in deliberately, grotesquely elevated Sanskrit compounds, such as: *kṛpīṭa-sambhava-mahā-dikpāla-helā-vihāra-vāhyāḷi-vāha*, 'Spendid vehicle for the god of fire, lord of the east, when he goes out for a ride.' The rams 'supplied a head to Dakṣa, when Vīrabhadra cut off the one he had.' And so on. The same process we observed earlier in Vallabharāya's description of the cock-fight is still very much in force. The materials at hand are entirely realistic, carefully observed in all their small details (the kind of leaves that decorate the rams' horns, the way they follow the farmers who have raised them, and so on); but the overall force of such a passage is, by the end, anything but realistic. It belongs, rather, to a space that has opened up between observed reality and its incongruous mythic, erotic, and stylistic elevation. So the ram who dies in this ironically reformulated game, which has become a heroic battle, will, like the cocks described earlier, go to heaven to make love to Indra's courtesans; he is the 'silenced king of goats and lovers' (*gŏrrĕ-miṇḍagīḍu*). Such a space—systematically generated by nearly each segment of Mañcana Śarma's progression through the streets of Warangal—has no parallel in the literature of the Sanskrit medieval *bhāṇa*.

In this light, the apparent hyper-realism of the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* takes on a new meaning. It marks a point of departure, or, better, delineates

stages on the way.[17] Vallabharāya subordinates realism to the more serious goal of reaching toward a heightened proposition. This is an 'as-if' realism, a surface phenomenon that serves the poet as a resource. He continually explodes the realistic surface in the interests of a creative reimagining of reality. It is all too easy to get lost in the wealth of precise detail and to miss the ruptures the poet designs as he takes his heroes through this process. Reading the text through the distorting opacities of time and language, one can fail to notice that it is shaping a ritual of a very different type.

4. A Close Reading

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the process carried through in the work as a whole is also encapsulated in many individual verses. Take, for example, the following vignette by Vallabhararāya of one woman delousing another:

sārĕku sārĕk' emiṭiki campĕdu goraṭa yĕrralaina vā-
lāru nakhâṅkurambula vayasya kacambuna p̲āṭa pāḍiy īr'-
īrici sīt-kṛtul cĕrulak' imp' ŏnarimpa c̲akora-netra nī
cāru-kuca-dvayambu mamu c̲ampĕḍu dosamu nīku c̲āllade

'Why do you keep on killing lice,
one by one, with your red fingernails,
going through layer after layer
of your friend's long hair, hissing
sweetly as you squish them?
Isn't it sin enough, my lovely lady,
that your exquisite breasts
are killing me?' [108]

[17] We note in passing the fascinating contrast with Auerbach's analysis of Latin comic realism: 'Everything commonly realistic, everything pertaining to everyday life, must not be treated on any level except the comic, which admits no problematic probing. As a result the boundaries of realism are narrow.' E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), 27 [on Petronius]. Vallabharāya also combines comedy with realistic observation, but the effect is rather one of expanding both the realistic base and the mental universe upon which it works, leading the reader or listener into some previously unimagined world.

Realistic? Of course. It is a scene one can see on the steps or porches of village or city homes any day. It is also a scene utterly inappropriate to poetry as usually conceived or practised. That, of course, is the point. The sheer everyday, ubiquitous nature of the event makes it grotesque when articulated in high *kāvya* style. At this point—once the subject matter of the verse is grasped (which happens rather late in the Telugu verse)—a certain magic begins. We have a highly lyrical, also somewhat moving, depiction of a hitherto impossible subject drawn from direct observation. Liquids, sibilants, and long vowels create a smooth, wavy line. Even the 'hissing' and 'squishing,' in this phono-acoustic setting, become arousing and pleasing, although also, of course, a little unsettling. In fact, the verse as a whole brings into play the eroticism that is truly latent in delousing: the women are sitting, relaxed, their breasts almost certainly exposed (Āndhra village women wore no blouses), their hair loose; they are intent upon this routine physical activity with its suggestion of easy familiarity and intimacy. A male observer notices the texture of the scene. But for this male observer to produce a crafted, metrically precise, lyrically evocative verse out of such experience is something unprecedented. As if this were not enough, the poet moves in the last line to parody notions of proper conduct and ethics: isn't it 'sin enough' that such beautiful women are killing him by the voluptuous beauty of their breasts? Sin, *dosamu*, belongs to the domain of dharmic discourse; but in at least two contexts—delousing and arousing—'killing' is never considered sinful. Hence the ironic space that opens up, to hilarious effect, as the verse moves toward its conclusion. Along with the utterly incongruous *dharmic* context, conventional Sanskrit erotic poetry is also parodically suggested here; the language of the final line could almost have been drawn from the domain of love-poetry, except that now it emerges out of the strikingly ordinary, even crudely natural, street scene.

It is all too easy to read the verse as no more than a mischievous but simple depiction of a common occurrence in real life. It is, of course, also this. But as one proceeds through the poem, the realistic mode becomes so intimately intertwined with grotesque parody that a kind of transformation must take place. The realistic material is stretched or magically

transmuted into an experience far beyond ordinary observation or literary realism. The poem takes the raw material and, already in the first line, elevates it to a supra-realistic lyricism—or, perhaps, a pseudo-lyricism, pregnant with self-parody. It then brings the blatant incongruity of theme and tone into awareness, undermining the listener's initial response of doubt and surprise; but by the time we reach the third line, where the whole vignette is laid bare and we can hear the hissing and squishing, a further movement begins in the direction of harmonizing the incongruous features and harnessing them to what could be called a higher eroticism, apparent in the final line with its teasing rhetorical question. The listener's eyes move, with the words, from the young women's hair and fingernails to their full breasts. We could call the final effect of the poem a 'second-order realism' which uses what is given from clear-sighted observation to produce an experience that is beyond realism but never detached from the real. Incongruity catapults the text and its readers into a space in which the everyday world can be, indeed must be, significantly changed.

Always at least two levels of perception are present and parodically combined—but this combination may take several distinct forms. Look again at the verse that immediately follows the one just cited:

paripāṭī-kharva-kharjûparati-samaya-sambhrānta-sambhoga-bhaṅgin
ṯaruṇī-ratnâmbu helā-taraḷa-gati haridrā-rajaḥ-kardamambun
ḵurul' allāḍaṅga vīgun ḵucamulu ḵadalan gŏntu ḵūrcuṇḍi nūrĕn
ḵaravalli-kāca-bhūṣā-kala-madhura-jhaṇat-kāramul toramul gān [110]

Like the wild lovemaking they call 'mortar and pestle,'
with the woman on top, her hair dancing
on her back, sumptuous breasts swinging,
she squats on her haunches, grinding turmeric
into paste, glass bangles on both her arms
ringing in perfect harmony.

The picture is again an everyday one—a woman squatting on her haunches as she grinds turmeric into paste in a rhythmic movement of her whole body. But it takes three full lines of the four-line poem to bring this

image into focus. The listener or reader is at first—and for most of the poem—under the impression that the woman is actively making love in the inverted posture (*uparati*). Vallabharāya has chosen here a long, relatively infrequent, and grandiose metre, *mahā-sragdhara*—a choice that itself expresses the dynamism and intensity of posture and movement. Consisent with this choice is the elevated Sanskrit diction: the 'wild lovemaking they call "mortar and pestle" ' is *paripāṭī-kharva-khar-jûparati-samaya-sambhrānta-sambhoga*, a mouthful of sibilants, velars, and aspirates suggestive of explosive passion. The woman is *sambh-rānta*—'wild' to a point where she has almost gone into another world of feeling, beyond normal identity boundaries. We can imagine this level of diction as somehow suited to a courtly love poem that is elaborately crafted and sustained. The passion and abandon are evident in the very way the words are chosen and combined, in the phono-aesthetic and iconic detail. The lines have a majestic movement and weight—so much so that even when, toward the end of the second line, the theme of turmeric emerges, one almost fails to register this shift. The turmeric itself appears as *haridrā-rajaḥ-kardamambu*, literally the 'paste of yellow powder' that grandly replaces the ordinary Telugu word *pasupu*. Sanskrit composita still reign supreme. What clinches the image and finally shifts the register is a straightforward Telugu verb, *nūrĕn*, 'was grinding,' at the end of line 3. By this point the actual subject of the verse has become clear. Note that in this case, however, in contrast to the delousing poem, the poet has successfully masked his true theme during the whole of the listener's initial entry into the verse. In addition, he has successfully masked his own parodic tone. When the rush of Sanskrit compounds finally gives way to the simple Telugu verb, a momentary deflation sets in, jarring the listener with the incongruously doubled registers. But the final line immediately 'reflates' perception with yet another long Sanskrit compound—*karavalli-kāca-bhūṣā-kala-madhura-jhaṇatkāramul*, 'glass ban-gles on both her arms ringing in perfect harmony'—that could apply equally to the movements of pounding turmeric and making love. The two levels have again been successfully superimposed, and the every-day image has been transformed again so that by now you can no longer

extricate the erotic from the parodic. If you keep staring at the woman with her mortal and pestle, even though you 'know' she is 'only' grinding turmeric, you still see a woman making love on top of her man. The transformation of a familiar reality, potentially ludicrous in force and tone, actually endures.

Sometimes 'realism' of this type has to be invented from scratch. For example, in the verse that immediately precedes the one on delousing we find a tailor who has his own agenda:

> He measures her breasts with his fingers,
> extended from the thumb to the pinky.
> From the corner of his eye
> he studies them, up and down,
> focusing his eyes, again and again,
> on her armpits. He smiles and flirts,
> this tailor who wants to be a lover,
> with desire in his heart,
> and never finishes the blouse for the whore. [106]

We may be pardoned for suggesting that Vallabhararāya never saw such a tailor on the street. Nonetheless, the description has the same realistic tone as the delousing verse. Again, the incongruous choice of topic shouts through the lyrical style. On the other hand, the staccato effect of the short, autonomous sentences joined together in a single verse creates the sense of even more meticulous and precise observation. We watch the tailor's eyes and hands as they move across the breasts and armpits of his customer, whom we identify as a whore (*vĕla-ceḍiya*) only at the very end. The very meticulousness compensates for the fact that the scene is entirely imaginary. Reality—especially when presented to us in a second-order realism—need not be factual. Always, there is an internal process at work in the individual stanza, taking us beyond the surface presentation of events, intensifying our experience through an ironic inner frame that is then itself stretched, scrutinized, and transcended. We tend to think of framing as relatively static, the setting in place of fixed boundaries that somehow contain what is framed; but throughout the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, poetic frames tend to be restless, in

motion, progressively evolving, twisting, and spinning as any given verse unfolds. The description of the poetic process in the two verses we have examined holds true, in general, for the structure of the book as a whole.

5. Second-order Parody: The Outer Limit of a Style

The second-order parody of which we have spoken in relation to a constantly exploded and refashioned surface reproduces a subtle and intricate dynamic within the historical literary universe that engendered this text. To anyone conversant with classical Telugu poetry, the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* bears a powerful similarity to the style of the great fourteenth-century poet Śrīnātha, as noted earlier. Since the publication of the text in 1909 by Ramakrishnakavi, its authorship has been disputed. A consensus emerged, including even scholars who were prepared to believe that Vallabharāya was the actual author, to the effect that Śrīnātha contributed at least some verses. Here again a profound misconception has taken root.

Ramakrishnakavi himself discussed the question of authorship in detail and concluded by favoring Śrīnātha as the author of the text.[18] Another highly respected scholar and editor, Veturi Prabhakara Sastri in his *Śṛṅgāra Śrīnāthamu* (1923) was even more unequivocal: the style is so close to Śrīnātha's that it could only be Śrīnātha's; furthermore, the introductory section praising Vallabharāya's family with great fervor must mean that Vallabharāya was the patron of this work. No poet, said Prabhakara Sastri, would have praised himself or his family with such abandon.[19] Therefore, Vallabharāya must have paid Śrīnātha handsomely and bought the authorship of the book.[20] Unfortunately, this conclusion

[18] See Bommakanti Venkata Singaracarya's introduction, citing the Ramakrishnakavi *editio princeps*, liii–lvii; also discussion and summary by Bandaru Tamayya, op. cit., 5–6.

[19] Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, *Śṛṅgāra-śrīnāthamu* (Vijayavada: Veturi Sankara Sastri, 1923), 260–1. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri's edition of *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* was published by Prabhakara parisodhaka mandali in Hyderabad (third printing, 1960).

[20] Such a practice is attested in Tamil literary history. However, the relationship

flies in the face of the whole Telugu literary tradition, where poets habitually praise themselves and their lineage in their prefaces, without inhibition, albeit in words sometimes projected onto their patrons.[21]

Later Telugu critics tended to give greater credence to the identification of Vallabharāya as author of the text in several medieval metrical works.[22] Still, heated discussion raged in the literary journals of the 1920's and 1930's. Bandaru Tammayya, for example, in an essay published in 1922 in the Literary Supplement of Āndhra Patrika, valiantly strove to save the reputation of both Śrīnātha and Vallabharāya; his solution was that the latter must have written the book with significant help by the former.[23] So this rather unusual book had, in effect, two authors (*ubhaya-kartṛtvamu*). This not uncharacteristic compromise position, based on the premise that only Śrīnātha could have written in Śrīnātha's style, was widely accepted by Telugu scholars. Arudra, the mid-twentieth-century historian of Telugu literature who embodies a sort of scholarly consensus, unequivocally supported the notion of Śrīnātha's authorship of a good part of the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, including the preface on Vallabharāya's family.[24] One important exception to the dominant position was the view laconically expressed by Tekumalla Acyuta Ravu (1924–25)[25] that what appears in *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* as Śrīnātha's style is actually a parody of the latter. Although Acyuta Ravu did not explore the deeper implications of this insight, the hint he dropped could be considered a potential breakthrough to understanding the text. The argument

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between patron and author and the concept of *aṅkitamu*—wrongly translated as 'dedication'—are yet to be fully explored with cultural sensitivity in Indian literary history.

[21] Here, too, Vallabharāya speaks of himself in the third person in both the introductory genealogical section and in the concluding verse (*bharata-vākyam*), both apparently meant for recitation by the Stage Manager.

[22] See above, n. 2.

[23] Argument summarized in Bandaru Tammayya's introduction to his 1953 edition of the text, 6–8.

[24] Arudra, *Samagra-āndhra-sāhityam* (2nd edition, Vijayavada: Prajasakti Book House, 1990), 3: 325–6.

[25] See *Bhārati*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1924–25); Bandaru Tammayya, op. cit.: 8. Cf. Tekumalla Acyuta Ravu, *Vijayanagara sāṃrājyamandali āndhra vāṅmaya caritramu*, vol. 1: 85, 89, 95.

was later picked up and extended by an outstanding scholar, Bommakanti Venkata Singaracarya (whose 1972 [1991] edition we have used). In his view, not only did Vallabharāya—the sole author of the text—parody Śrīnātha's poetic voice, but he also caricatured Śrīnātha himself in the figure of Mañcana Śarma, the playboy protagonist of the book.[26]

The problem is not unlike that of Borges' famous hero, Pierre Menard, 'the author of Don Quixote.' Pierre Menard, at the turn of the twentieth century, sets himself the arduous task of reproducing Cervantes' text verbatim—not by immersing himself in Cervantes' life and spirit to the point where he could write Cervantes' book (that would have been the easy way), but from his own experience. He eventually succeeds in producing some passages that coincide exactly with the 'original.' But the new context in which these lines must be read completely transforms their meaning: 'The text of Cervantes and that of Menard are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More ambiguous, his detractors will say; but ambiguity is a richness.)'[27]

Similarly with our text. In Śrīnātha's *Bhīma-khaṇḍamu*, the great sages, Vyāsa and others, are waiting in the sky for an auspicious moment to enter the temple-city of Dakṣârāma. Here is how the poet describes their discussion:

> Gārgya decrees: Travel at dawn.
> Bṛhaspati says: Wait for a good omen.
> Viṣṇu advises: Ask the Brahmins.
> Everyone agrees: the *abhijit* moment is good.[28]

In *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*, Mañcana and Ṭiṭṭibha, still outside the city, are debating the appropriate moment to enter the town in search of whores. This is what they say to one another:

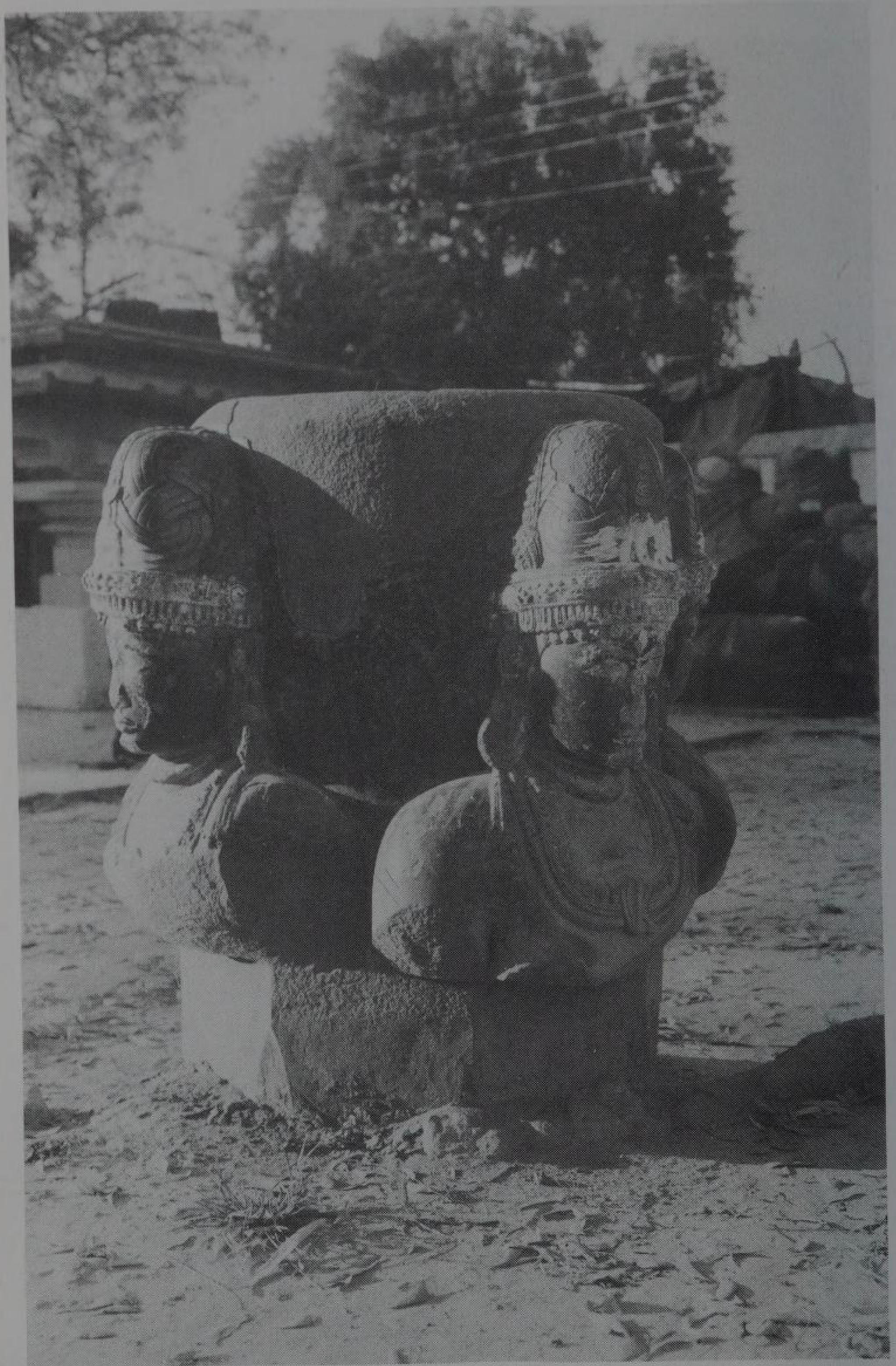
> Gārgya decrees: Travel at dawn.
> Bṛhaspati says: Wait for a good omen.
> Vyāsa's opinion is: Begin when you feel good.
> Viṣṇu advises: Ask the Brahmins. [66]

[26] See Singaracarya, Introduction, xxv–xlii.
[27] Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 44–5.
[28] *Bhīmakhaṇḍamu* 3.41.

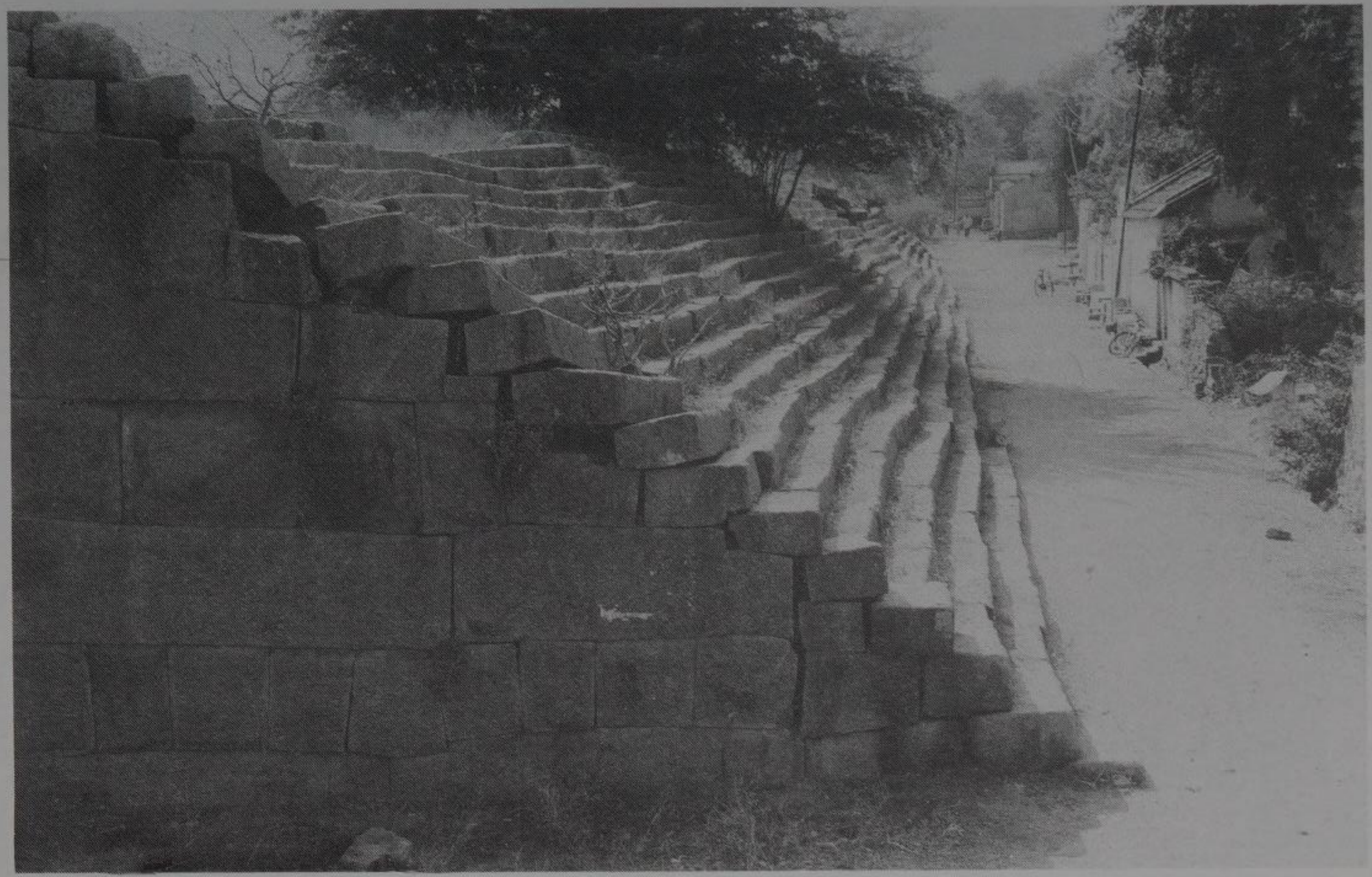
Orugallu or Ekasila, the 'Single Stone' of Warangal; tank visible at right.

A segment of the inner earthen wall with its (dry) moat at right.

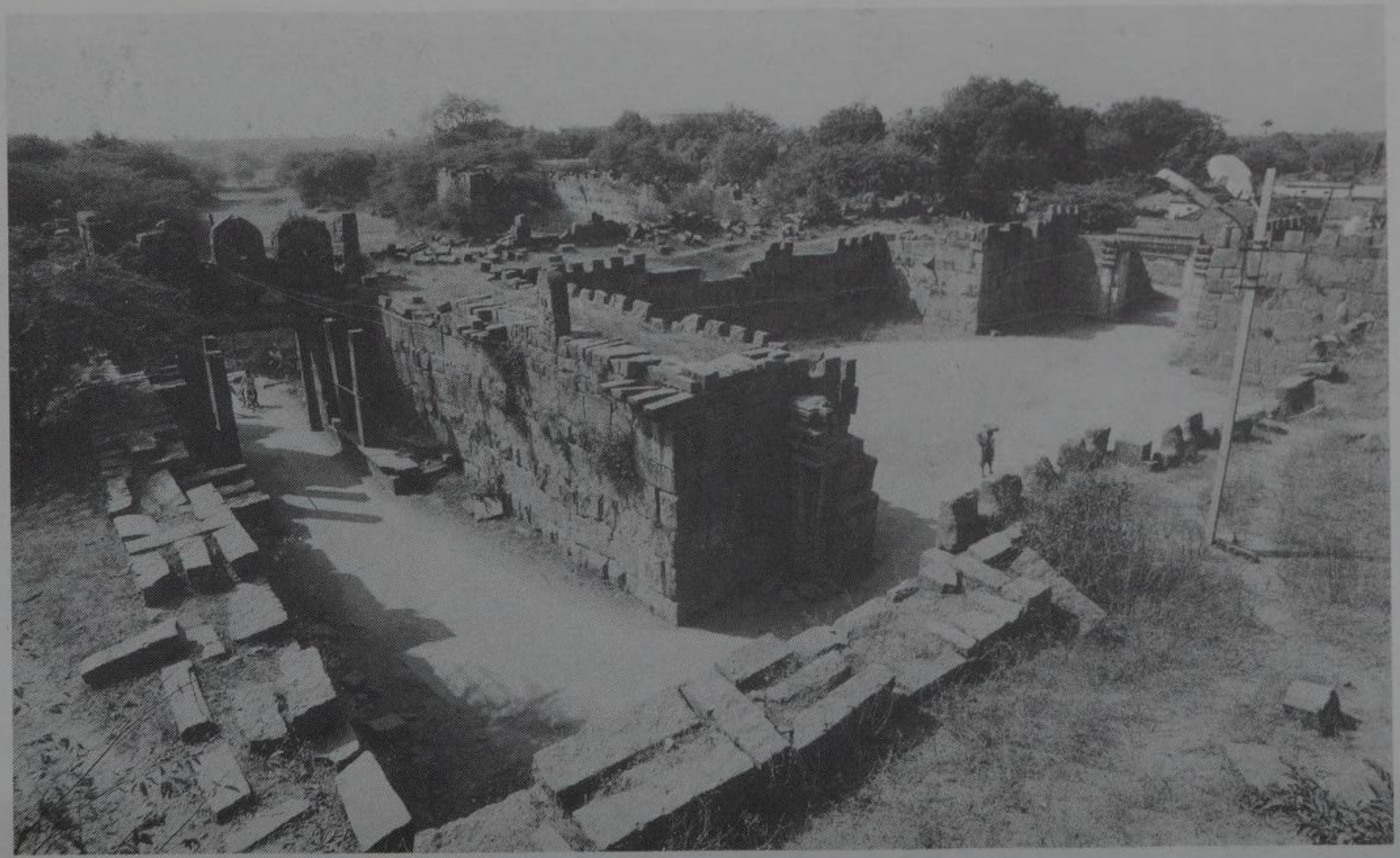
Southern *kirti-torana* of the Svambhu-Siva temple complex; northern *kirti-torana* visible behind it.



Caturmukha-linga of the Svayambhu-Siva temple.

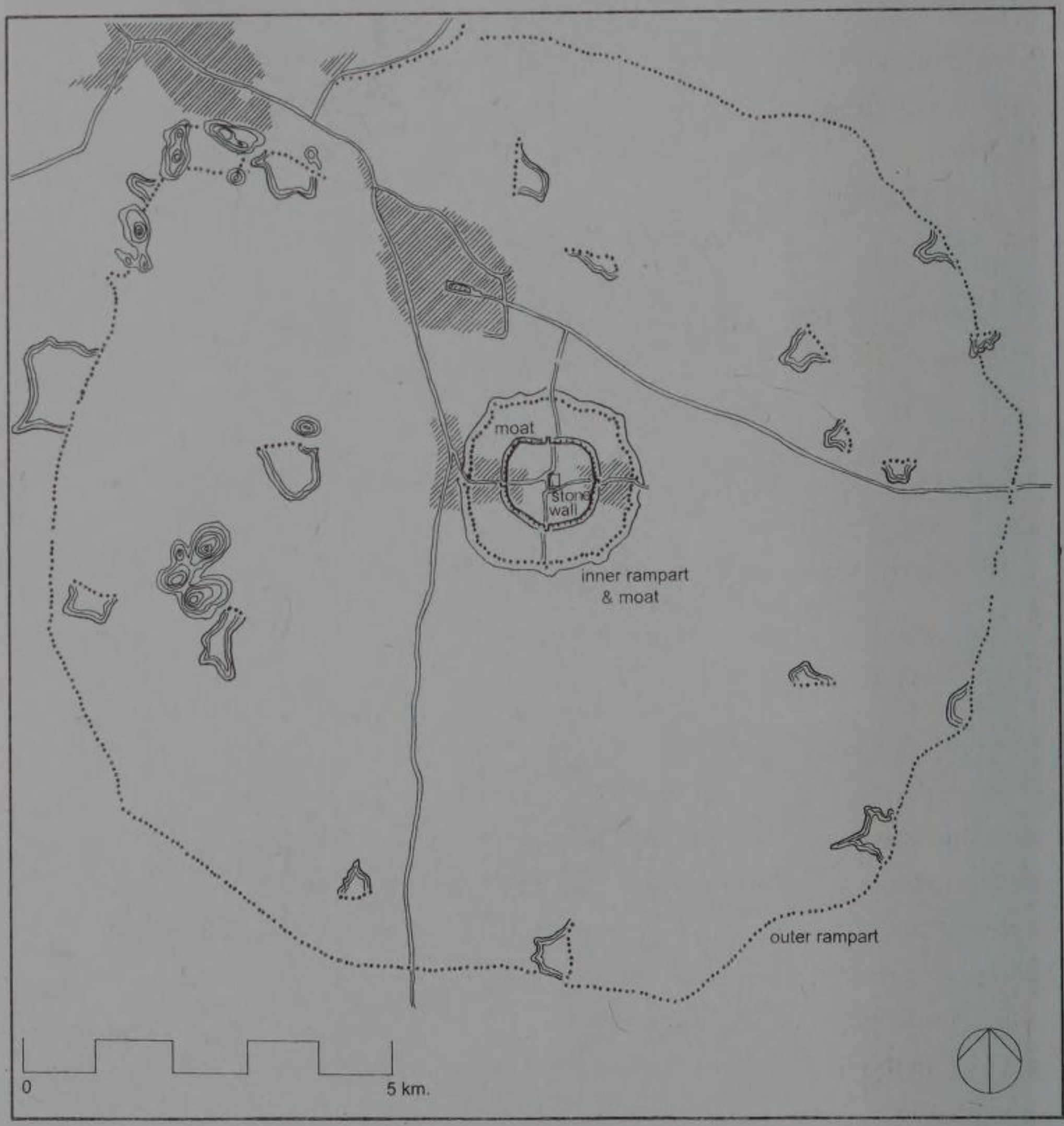


A small lane within the city walls.



Aerial view of the eastern gateway in the city's inner stone wall, showing the 'bent entrance' (*vanka-dara*) and open courtyard (*anganam*). The doorway at right is the 'great city gate' leading to the royal avenue (*raja margambu*).

Figures from base of door frame, *antarala* doorway, Kotagudi, Ghanpur, Warangal District, A.P. (Photo courtesy Amy Trubeck).



Map of Warangal.

If it looks more or less the same to you, aside from the transposition of the third line to the fourth,[29] you have missed the point. The entire poem now means something entirely different. At the same time, the parodic force of this 'quotation' is clearly evident. Relocating, or dislocating, the Śrīnātha text has produced a new text, hilariously integrated into a setting utterly unlike the original context.

Several more examples of this reframed 'quotation' technique stand out in Vallabharāya's book. For instance, we have the following description of Mañcana Śarma, dressed up for his visit to the city:

A dhoti, light rose in color, its pleats carefully pressed;
a dot of Ganges mud perfumed with rosewater
perfectly centered on his forehead;
silken thread interwoven with gold circling his right wrist;
woven strands of white silk across his shoulder, each perfectly
straight;
red shawl, thick long hair, red lips, a slight smile:

he's the perfect dandy—Govinda Śarma—
the very image of love.

Not only does the poem as a whole remind the listener of the tone and texture of a Śrīnātha verse; entire chunks have been lifted verbatim from Śrīnātha's works. The first line, *ganneru pū jaya karam' ŏppu nīrkāvi maḍugu dovati piñjĕ viḍici kaṭṭi*, takes a phrase from Śrīnātha's description of Prince Nala's visit to the *pūjā*-room: *ganneru pū jaya kanupaṭṭu jilugaina salila-kāṣāya-vastrambu kaṭṭi*, 'wearing a fine silk ochre dhoti which looks more like light rose.'[30] Nala, on his way to worship, must be dressed in the appropriate ochre color, which should suggest that desire is controlled (*śānta*); Mañcana Śarma, on the other hand, is giving full expression to sensuality. The quotation retains the texture of the original verse, and even something of its vocabulary, at the same time ironically

[29] Vallabharāya's version is close to an oral Sanskrit verse on this subject as well as a verse in the Sanskrit *Bhīma-khaṇḍamu* (9.6). The former: *uṣas śaśaṃsa gārgyas tu śakunaṃ tu bṛhaspatiḥ / manojavaṃ tu māṇḍavyo vipra-vākyaṃ janârddanaḥ //* See Gundavarapu Laksminarayana's commentary on *Bhīma-khaṇḍamu* 3.41 (293).

[30] Śrīnātha, *Naiṣadhamu* 8.103.

diverting it into a violently opposite context, from *pūjā*-room to whore-house.

The second line, too, is pure Śrīnātha: *gŏjjaṅgi pūnīru k̲uliki mediñcina gaṅga-maṭṭi lalāṭakamuna ṯīrci*, which resumes *gŏjjaṅgi pūnīru k̲uliki mediñcina kamma kasturi mena k̲alayan aladun*, 'fragrant musk smeared all over the body, perfumed with rosewater'—part of Śrīnātha's description of how even animals who die in Dvārakā assume a form like that of the god Viṣṇu (*sārūpya*).[31] For Mañcana Śarma, the simple dot of Ganges mud enhances his beauty, while affirming his Brahminhood; there is no likelihood that this dandy would smear his whole body with dark musk. Again, tone and texture are preserved, while minimal changes reflect the new tenor. The remaining lines of the verse maintain this same Śrīnātha-like form.

The net result is a parodic reworking of Śrīnātha, almost a comic commentary on the Śrīnātha style. In a sense, a literary revolution that Śrīnātha effected in Telugu poetry has now exhausted itself. Śrīnātha brought to Telugu poetry all the exuberance of oral improvisation coupled with the dignity and gravity of Sanskrit diction. His poetic lines are expansive, full-throated, extravagant; a verse is filled to completion, bursting with sonic energy. These lines cumulate incrementally in the *kāvya* texts he produced, which create their subjects in sound as living realities. He sings the temple at Dakṣârāma into existence in this way. But in course of time, Śrīnātha's style became imitable, as we know from the large number of oral *cāṭu* verses that the tradition attributes to him. An oral milieu of remembered verses has emerged around this protean figure and his highly characteristic textures. So marked are these features that already in the seventeenth-century scholars such as Appakavi immediately recognized the Śrīnātha-like verses from the oral tradition—including one from our text—as being Śrīnātha's. But the actual process of literary evolution is more complex than the simple citation and identification of a particular style.

In effect, Vallabharāya, by imitating Śrīnātha and occasionally even lifting lines from the great poet, has declared the end of the living impulse

[31] Śrīnātha, *Kāśī-khaṇḍamu* 3.119.

that produced such verses. Were he seriously imitating Śrīnātha, we would have no more than a weak continuation of his predecessor's influence. But by parodic imitation he has actually marked the limit of the Śrīnātha stylistic breakthrough, clearing the way for a new, very different kind of literary culture to emerge. From here the path lies open to the *kāvya* style pioneered by Peddana and others, where the sonorous fullness of Śrīnātha has given way to more delicate, contemplative, and inwardly directed textures. Without Śrīnātha's breakthrough, and his great popularity, the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* could not have been composed, nor would it have been necessary; but once this sophisticated parody existed, there was no further room for either the Srīnātha enterprise or for another such work of comic imitation. An internally differentiated and highly self-conscious parody of this magnitude constitutes its own final limit.

This is a test-case of literary ecology, with interesting problems of genre identification very much a part of the changing literary scene. *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* is, in fact, a dual text: both a *vīthi* text for performance, something like the Sanskrit *bhāṇas* mentioned above; and a *kāvya* which can be read alone. We cannot say if the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu* was ever performed in a temple ritual context; but the fact that it has this complex, double nature suggests that it stands apart from both *bhāṇas* and *kāvyas* of that time. Its outermost frame is, technically, a *kāvya* frame, almost added as an afterthought; its internal structure, within the frame, is that of a *bhāṇa*-like walking-tour through a south Indian city. But even as a *bhāṇa* this text divides in two—a second-order parodic *bhāṇa*, implicitly parodying other *bhāṇas*, and the embedded, traditional *bhāṇa*-like inset relating to Śrīkākuḷam. The inset, we have argued, tends to the homeostatic formula of violation and reversal leading to the reestablishment of the norm; but the 'outer' *bhāṇa*, which appears parodic, reveals itself under close observation to be transformative in a more far-reaching, sustained, and open-ended way. Another way to say this is to argue that the reframing of *bhāṇa* in its more traditional form, as an inset, already points to the poet's sense of the 'homeostatic' *bhāṇa's* stagnation and his wish to infuse this form with new content. Perhaps for this reason Vallabharāya refers to his poem as *vīthi*. Following the same line of thought,

we may well wonder if the Sanskrit base-text to which Vallabharāya refers—Rāvipāti Tripurântaka Deva's *Premâbhirāma*—existed as anything other than a necessary object of lampoon. Thus in claiming to be a Telugu rendering of this hypothesized Sanskrit original, the opening lines of our text provide a provocative satire on the ruling conventions of the contemporary literary world. For the same reasons, the verse which compares Tripurântaka Deva with great poets such as Nannaya and Tikkana (36) should be read in a blatantly sarcastic tone.

6. Second-order Realism

Second-order parody, doubly split in its registers along the incongruous fault-lines we have sought to define, resists simple classification. Indeed, each of its primary features seems to exist within an unfolding process that takes us past its surface appearance. Hyper-realism, themes of violation, obscenity, pornographic description—all of these propel forward a movement toward a new reality, which emerges via the ever-deepening inward movement through space in the walled city. There are critical points of transition in this progression.

We have looked with some detail at one—the Śrīkākuḷam inset. The contrast this inset sets up provides a basic structural logic to the text. But as we proceed further toward the climax, as night falls in the Āryavāṭika 'high-class neighborhood,' another unusual verse claims our attention. Mañcana Śarma is waiting in the house of a Śaiva temple priestess (*tamaḍi-sāni*), whom he has sent as a love-messenger to Kāma-mañjari. While he is waiting, he performs his evening prayers near a well behind the Vīrabhadra shrine. He sings to Lord Śiva:

> No other god
> could hit Death on his head
> with the leg of a cot and defeat him.
> No other god
> could knock out the Sun's teeth,
> or burn Love with the fire in his eye.
> Could I ever fold my hands in prayer
> to any god but Śiva? [274]

Suddenly, we are in the world of a genuine prayer—no satire, no parody, no doubling in language or thought, no incongruity or disjunction. Compare this with two earlier mentions of prayer, beginning with the dawn moment before the two protagonists set off for the city:

> I'm very strict in my ritual observance, and I have already finished the morning fire-offering prayers and ceremonies. I hope you have washed your face and prayed to your gods. We should enter the city as the cows leave home, kicking up dust; that's a lucky moment. And dawn is the best time for beginnings. [65]

This auspicious moment, 'when the cows leave home' [*go-dhūḷi-lagna*] seems formally close to the evening hour when the cows come home [again *go-dhūḷi-lagna*, 273]. The whole course or progression that the text describes unrolls between these two points. But the first is clearly parodic and rather ludicrous, illuminated by the prior descriptions of Kāma-mañjari's 'face'/vagina (at the time of her menstruation, 62) and the nocturnal combats of the boudoir, while the second is lyrical and 'straight.' Then we have the following discussion with Mācaldevi, the king's courtesan:

> 'Where are you from, sir?'
> 'From Kāsalnāḍu.'
> 'And who are you?'
> 'I'm the son of Mādhava of the Sacred Black-Gram lineage.'
> 'And your good name?'
> 'They call me Govinda Mañcana Śarma.'
> 'What brings you here?'
> 'To favor people like you.'
> 'In that case, please have a seat.'
> 'First we must bathe and pray.'
> 'Where do you go to do that?'
> 'Since I'm a Brahmin, I go where the cooking women live.' [189]

Mañcana Śarma presents a pious veneer; he has to 'bathe and pray,' even as he is on his way, as a Brahmin, to the *akka-vāḍa*—probably a pun on

akka, 'cook' [*vaṇṭalakka*] and *akka*, 'whore.'[32] So much for piety and self-control.

But now, at the end of the day, the devotional mood is sincere. The tone has changed, and the contrast with earlier verses, with their ribald effects, is immediately apparent. Moreover, this new tone seems to apply to Mañcana Śarma's love for Kāma-mañjari, from this point on—a sincere love, almost romantic, which comes out in the gentle apostrophe to the moon in the final verse (292). Of course, romance does not prevent Mañcana Śarma from fixing up his companion Ṭiṭṭibha with a young whore—although the beautiful prayer to the moon is also meant to be overheard by Ṭiṭṭibha, perhaps refining his somewhat crude sensibilities. In these last verses, we are moved into a mode of magical harmonies, a far cry from where we began. Note, also, that in verse 287 Mañcana Śarma reverses his earlier complaint (104) about a oil-monger housewife, whom God should have made a whore: this time God's mistake was in not creating a husband for the young courtesan. All this suits the change in direction that we are observing in the final verses.

The deliberately shocking sensuality that permeates the text throughout results, in the end, not in a starkly bounded, reordered and normative universe—the two lovers are still *jāra-dampatulu* (286), an adulterous couple, or *jāra-jāyā-patulu* (292), 'adulterous husband and wife'—but in a heightened fulfilment in the luminous nocturnal world of lovers' rendezvous and play. Second-order realism rearranges the coordinates of its empirically observed and lyrically articulated urban space. In some, partial sense, at least, these lovers have now been assimilated to the rubric of *dampatulu* or *jāyā-patulu*, a married couple. Such a move, rather unexpected in light of all that has preceded it, has its own meaning and telos. By now the domains of illicit violation and domesticity, or of whores and housewives, are powerfully fused. The division is largely blurred. A new reality, with its own emotional textures, and a hint of choice, has come into being.

[32] In verse 263 there is a reference to *akkala-vāḍa*, clearly the bordello quarter. In verse 189, *akka-vāḍa* may be distinct from, but also playing upon, *akkala-vāḍa*.

This is an extraordinary metamorphosis produced by an extraordinary poetic text. Earlier, the world is deeply divided, so deeply that violent juxtapositions are the stuff of parodic experience. Housewives and whores are incongruously compared. Similarly, widows, who should be chaste, are voraciously sexual (209). When the opposed categories are brought into relation with one another, the result is comic—in a sense, unthinkable. But as the day advances and the heroes move further in, through the picaresque, pornographic scenarios of the mirror ritual and the dharmic judgement at the whore-court, past the cock-fights and the street rituals, past the colorful gallery of women of many castes and occupations, slowly a powerful change happens inside Mañcana. A single, freshly experienced world coalesces out of the disparate and conflicting fragments that have until now colored his perception and filled his mind.

In this sense, the complex parody unfolds a psycho-drama. Was it all in Mañcana Śarma's mind all along—or in the mind of the poet, who is creating these existential effects? At the end, the poet gives us a glimpse of the process he has masterminded, reverting again to the external *kāvya* mode. The guises of the actors fall away, and Vallabharāya speaks through the Stage-Manager, as if coming himself into the forefront:

> The actors came from Dorasamudram.
> The lovers belong to Orugallu.
> The poet is from the grand
> city of Vinukŏṇḍa. God brought all three
> together, to delight people of taste.

Why is this verse so moving? Is there something about the transparency of the frame, as we become aware of the 'play'? The *kāvya* setting cuts through the category of drama. A wider frame—God the creator—now appears, uniting the three levels of actors, lovers, and the creative poet. The integrative aspect is made explicit along with an implicit acknowledgement of the poet's role in imagining this universe into existence, no doubt with help from God. No simple, first-order realism can compete with a complex, highly self-conscious statement such as this, aimed at a

reality that is at once tangible, differentially experienced, and continuously self-transformative.

Even at this subtle moment of conclusion, Vallabharāya condenses a suggestion of the process he has unfolded into a single multi-vocal word. His home is Vinukŏṇḍa, the 'grand city'—*mahā-puṭa-bhedanamu*, a pregnant term. Literally it means something like 'exploding the cover,' that is, breaking open a surface or a mask. It can also mean 'forcing the eyes open.' This opening of vision, to see past the surface, is the work of Vallabharāya's play.

A Lover's Guide to Warangal

There are ten forms of drama.
Among them, the street-play (*vīthi*) is best—
the path to all moods and feelings.
If you would like to know which great poet
composed this book, listen: I'll tell you.

First there was the sage, no ordinary one.
He made a whole counter-world, in his eagerness to excel.
He set up a galaxy, upside-down, for Triśaṅku.[1]
He played with Menakā, the celestial beauty, on the clear banks of the
Mālinī.
By praying to the mother of the Vedas, Goddess Gāyatrī,
he became a Brahmin sage.
He taught the art of archery to Rāma,
who was death to the demoness Tāṭakā,
and who broke the bow of Black-Neck Śiva.
Such was Viśvāmitra, Gādhi's son.

In his family was born Mañcanna,
whose splendor dazzled the earth,
and whose fame filled all space between heaven and earth
with brilliant white light.

Candrâmātya was his beloved son. His mind delighted in poetry and scholarship, bright as the pendant jewel hanging between the two breasts of Sarasvatī, goddess of learning.

[1] When Viśvāmitra failed to propel King Triśaṅku into heaven and the king was left dangling, upside down, between heaven and earth, the sage created an entire upside-down cosmos to contain him.

Poets praise him—who was Minister to Pĕda Bukka, the Karnāṭa king, and who gave gifts to his family—with a flow of words like the dancing waters of the heavenly river, that flows through Śiva's matted hair.

A son, Mañcana, wise as the teacher of the gods, a protector of all good people, was born to Candra and his wife Pocâmba.

Mañcana and his wife Tippama had four sons: Siṅgana, Tippana, Mallana, and wise Cĕnna.

Siṅgana's son was called Candra. He was strong in his good qualities, handsome in the eyes of women; a veritable king of the gods. All wise men praised him.

The daughter of Viṭṭhamantri of Mirutūru chose Malla for her husband, as Pārvatī married Śiva. They were happy.

To that Tripurama and Mallana five sons were born: Vallabha, Liṅgana, Tippana, Siṅgana, and Bhairava. They were all of them great ministers, love-gods to women, famous everywhere.

Among them, Vallabha was no ordinary mortal. In fame he rivaled the starry sky, the wishing-tree, and Mount Kailāsa. His beauty made you forget about the Love-God or Indra's son, Jayanta. In generosity, he outdid Jīmūtavāhana, Śibi, and Karṇa. He had a sharp mind, more than Śukra, Gārgya, or Bṛhaspati, guru to the gods. He overcame, by careful strategy, all the forces and components of enemy empires, and in self-discipline, he was greater than Bhīṣma.

This Vallabha, of undying fame, Mallikârjuna's son, had four sons: Baica[na], whose speech was deep as the Ganges' flow; Malla[na], who made women happy like the god of Desire; Pocana, who set his mind on Śiva's feet; Tippana, who was born for a life of literature.

Courage firm as the golden mountain belonged to Liṅga, who was unequalled among commanders, the support of Harihara's rule. Handsome as Manmatha, he outshone all other ministers, as the noonday sun outshines the stars.

Tippana, a lavish donor, married Pĕddamāmba, daughter of Tippanârya of the Harita lineage.

This Tippana, son of Mallana, was devoted to the worship of Śiva, as Viṣṇu was. His fame reached the limit of the cosmos, like a bee drawn to the elephant in heat that holds up space.

In truthfulness and fame, he was like Hariścandra and the Moon;[2] in pride and wealth, like Duryodhana and Kubera; in ravishing beauty and in wisdom, like the Love-God and Sanatkumāra; in elegance and good name, like Bhadra and Rāmabhadra. He—Tripurâri—was Treasurer to Harihara, heroic king.[3]

He smashed the ministers of rival kings, who followed evil policies. He shaped the policies of his own king in practical wisdom and tact. His courage was unimpeachable, his conduct impeccable. No one was his equal.

> Who needs the Boar,
> the Snake, the mountains,
> the elephants at the corners of the world,
> who needs the pseudo-Tortoise,
> if the two strong arms of Tripurâri-Tippana are there
> to bear the earth, circled by seven seas?

This Tippana—a worshipper of Śiva, and the Commander of Vinukŏṇḍa Fort[4]—had three wonderful sons, supports to their relatives: Baicana, Mallana,[5] and Tippa[na].

[2] The verse wrongly inverts this order.

[3] Harihara II of Vijayanagara (1377–1404).

[4] *śruta-parvata-durga* = a Sanskritization of Vinukŏṇḍa fortress.

[5] Veturi Prabhakara Sastri (*op. cit.*, 6) suggests the possibility of emending to *Vallabha* (a relatively small shift in the Telugu script). This would revise the genealogy so as to make Harihara's treasurer and the commander of Vinukŏṇḍa the father of our author; but it then requires a further emendation of *candamâmbika* in the following verse to *pĕddamāmba*, as in verse 11, or vice versa. The structure of the poetic genealogy would suit this reading, which now moves logically from praising Vallabharāya's father, Tippana, to the poet's extended self-description.

This latter Tippana[6] was the Treasurer of the King,[7] and husband to Candamâmbika. I am their son, Vallabhâmātya,[8] no ordinary man, ruler of Mopūru in Mulkināḍu, which has the income of three villages. I have mastered the ṚgVeda of the Āśvalāyana branch: I hold it in the palm of my hand. I made the god Bhairava visible to me and received from him the gift of poetry. People know me as belonging to the Viśvāmitra lineage.[9]

My words pour like the water of the heavenly river that gushes through the hair of Śiva as he dances each day at twilight. It is very rare for someone to be able to compose verses fragrant as camphor and betel, that the Goddess of Poetry chews in her mouth: but I can do it. When Kṛṣṇa danced with the cowherd girls—the Hallīsaka dance at midnight—a rich perfume filled the air, from the garland he was wearing: my poems have it, too. When I sing verses, it will feel to you like being sprinkled with milk from the ocean as it was churned for the sweet drink of life. Or it may sound like the resonant twang of Śiva's bow when he took the form of a hunter and shot Viṣṇu as his arrow.[10] My poems are redolent like the lotus blossoms that fill the great canal in Nĕllūru. I can outdo, in my generosity, the monsoon clouds, Karṇa, Kubera, the Moon, Bhoja—king of Dhārā—and Jīmūtavāhana. Not even the all-giving diamond of the gods, or the God of Wealth, or the rainclouds, or Bali, or the Sun and the Moon, or the wishing-tree, or the wishing-cow, can equal me. Integrity, wisdom, good fortune, skill, courage, generosity: I have them all beyond compare, more than anyone in this whole, great world.

[6] Or, following the proposed emendation of n. 5: the Tippana who was commander of Vinukŏṇḍa Fort. We have at present no way to resolve this issue in a satisfactory manner. Vallabharāya was thus either the son or the grandson of the Tippana who served Harihara and commanded Vinukŏṇḍa; if he was the grandson, his father must have inherited the post from the grandfather.

[7] Perhaps the same Harihara of note 3.

[8] The author of this text.

[9] Is there such a lineage (*kāmakāyanasa*) from this anomalous sage of an upside-down world?

[10] Śiva used Viṣṇu as his arrow when he shot flames at the Tripura demons.

I have been blessed by Bhairava, Pārvatī's beloved son,
who rules the world, his mind afloat in liquor
from the wishing tree, the wide-eyed bachelor
with drum, club, staff, and skull in his hands,
millions of dogs at his feet, white fangs in his mouth—
the most unruly god of all. [11]

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Vallabharāya composed this play called *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*: The Joys of Sex, after the model of the work known as *Premâbhirāma*: The Joys of Love, by Rāvipāṭi Tripurântaka Deva.[12]

'Tripurântaka Deva?
Not much of a poet, is he?
And that *Premâbhirāma*—is it a great book?
Great enough to be the model for a Telugu play?
And Vallabharāya thought it was worthy?
And why make it Telugu?'

You might ask these questions, and the answer is:

Mention Nannaya, Tikkana, Huḷakki Bhāskara,[13]
and Cimmapūḍi Amareśvara,[14] and good poets
will fold their hands in salute.
Rāvipāṭi Tippanna[15] is no less than they.
It's unfair to slight him.

They say 'Sanskrit is the mother of all languages,
but among the languages of the land
Telugu is best.' Of course.

[11] One line is missing from the manuscript. We have translated in first person, although technically the previous verses are in third person, as is conventional in Telugu *kāvya* prefaces. At this point, the play itself begins.

[12] *Premâbhirāmamu* does not exist. The following verses are spoken by the Sūtradhārā.

[13] One of the authors of the Telugu *Bhāskara Rāmāyaṇa*.

[14] The author of *Sarveśvara-śatakamu*.

[15] Tripurântaka Deva.

Between the aged mother
and the ravishing young daughter,
I'll take the daughter any day![16]

[*From backstage*:]

You're a lover on the move, with too many feet.
Addicted to honey. A fine singer,too.
Why are you wandering away
from the lotus, fully open to you,
in your own backyard? Have you lost your senses?
What do you think you'll find
in the wild forest?

You seem to be coming close,
king of flowers,[17]
but then you go away.
One minute you are gone,
but then you're back.
What can I say? For me,
you're like the golden deer
in Sītā's tale.[18]

[*The Stage-Manager, hearing these verses*:]

Now I understand. This is a love-letter sent by his lover,[19] Kāma-mañjari, from the posh neighborhood of Ekaśilānagaram[20] to Govinda Mañcana Śarma of the Kāsalnāḍu family, who is in love with her, but has left her for a distant land, on business. It looks unrelated, but really it is meant

[16] It is important to note the irony. This is not a flat statement preferring Telugu to Sanskrit! The connotation is that Sanskrit is assimilated to an old widow, while Telugu is a juicy young girl—the term *saubhāgya* pointing to her status as a non-widow.

[17] *Mañci-rāja*, diminutive for Govinda Mañcana Śarma, but also 'good king' = the bee, hence: king of flowers, with the suggestion that he is also the king of lovers.

[18] Sītā sent Rāma to fetch a golden deer that had caught her fancy; in Rāma's absence, Rāvaṇa kidnapped her.

[19] *punar-bhuvu*—literally, a woman married a second time. In this case: a married woman in love with Mañcana Śarma.

[20] Orugallu/Warangal.

to inflame his passion. It is his dear friend Ṭiṭṭibha the Merchant who is delivering the message, as if he were just reciting a poem. I know they are close friends from childhood. Let me see how they're doing. [Exit Stage-Manager]

A dhoti, light rose in color, its pleats carefully pressed;
a dot of Ganges mud perfumed with rosewater centered on his forehead;
silken thread interwoven with gold circling his right wrist;
woven strands of white silk across his shoulder, each perfectly straight;
red shawl, thick long hair, red lips, a slight smile:

he's the perfect dandy—Govinda Śarma—
the very image of love.[21]

He's the very best of the Kāsalnāḍu men,
and a nephew to Uncle Mustache.
A paragon of Brahmins. The god of desire
en route to the Āndhra city.[22]

Looking to the east, he addresses his friend Ṭiṭṭibha: 'Good morning, my friend. Did you sleep well? Still rather cold, isn't it, in these months of Puṣya and Māgha?[23]

You curl up till your chest rubs against your feet,
your teeth chatter, your head is tucked between your thighs,
you're all huddled into the shape of a pumpkin
as the cold climbs on your back and rides all over you
right before dawn.

Hot braziers, open fire, thick double blankets,
civet and musk: none are equal to the chill.
Our last hope is the warm breasts
of proud young women, scratched in love.

[21] The verse parodies Śrīnātha's description of Nala's visit to a temple: *Naiṣadhamu* 8.103.

[22] Orugallu.

[23] December–January.

Blankets in two or three thick layers,
musk and aloe covering the body:
the cold has breached these defenses,
pressing its attack, while all the heat of the world
has fled in panic to the high places—
the Telugu women's towering breasts.

Blankets in two or three thick layers,
dense incense, aloe ointments,
young women to embrace in cozy bedrooms—
thank god for these. Otherwise,
we'd never get through the winter.

Ṭiṭṭibha, did you sleep well? I hope you weren't cold. It's morning, the best time for us to set out. As for the omens:

You see that star still hanging in the east,
still bright: clearly, it is not quite dawn.
To the left, you can hear the owl hooting,
again and again. All our love-plans[24]
are sure to succeed.

Gently, again and again,
the peacock calls from the flowering tree
in the harsh sixth note of the scale.
This means, my merchant friend,
that we'll succeed.

A cock, a skylark,[25] a jackal, and a peacock:
seeing any of these four brings good luck. If they pass to your right and call, it's as good as gold in your pocket, the experts say.'

Ṭiṭṭibha listens:

'Did you hear that 'Cock-a-doodle-do,' Mañcana?
The Love-God made husbands and wives
all over the city
fight pitched battles of passion
all night long. Now that dawn is here,
he is sounding the trumpet of truce.'

[24] *śobhanam* also means 'the nuptial night.'
[25] *etrinta*.

They move on.

'In the winter, a rich man eats
food that's worth its weight in gold,
day after day: fresh rice,
curries sauteed in mustard,
thick with ghee, and fresh curds.'

Mañcana: This reminds me, Ṭiṭṭibha, of one day when Kāma-mañjari and I were in bed, hugging and kissing, tossing and turning, having a good time, when, by an act of fate, or a slip of the tongue, I called her by that other woman's name. This made her quite angry:

I had to work all night
just to bring her round.
Just as I was about to kiss her,
at long last, I was cheated out of it
by this goddamned rooster!

Ṭiṭṭibha—she is the majestic, sovereign Queen of passion, but I left her right in the middle of making love, at the height of spring. I lived through the hot season, cruel as Death himself as he bares his white teeth in a grin. And then I survived the rains, when the world turns red with pollen from coconut blossoms. As you know, separation during the monsoon is like death to lovers.

Curled up on her cot
in a grass hut that keeps out the gale,
sleeping alone, worn and pale,
this woman whose lover is far away
wakes to the roaring thunder
and sees, as lightning flashes,
the endless, killing clouds.

[Looking at the eastern sky:]

Dawn is here, more red than the hibiscus,
like Kāma-mañjari's 'face' when it turns deeply red
once a month.

It could be a pot full of jewels, my friend:
take it as our first good omen.
The sun is rising, its rays spreading through the sky,
through space, like tendrils of gold
in all sixteen shades.

Liquid light is pouring over the palaces of Orugallu,
fondling the golden pots that grace the roofs,
as if saffron were falling from heaven,
from the breasts of women,
locked in their lovers' embrace.[26]

I'm very strict in my ritual observance, and I have already finished the morning fire-offering prayers and ceremonies. I hope you have washed your face and prayed to your gods. We should enter the city as the cows leave home, kicking up dust; that's a lucky moment. And dawn is the best time for beginnings.

Gārgya decrees: Travel at dawn.
Bṛhaspati says: Wait for a good omen.
Vyāsa's opinion is: Begin when you feel good.
Viṣṇu advises: Ask the Brahmins.'[27]

They enter the outcaste neighborhoods of the city, beginning with the huts of the basket-weavers at the outer limit:

Whatever she says, she seems to be mocking,
but when she sings, she's all grace.
Casually glances in her hand mirror,
straightens her hair with her fingernails.
Drops the upper part of her sari and reveals her breasts.
Shows her teeth in a long, thin smile.
Fixes her earrings, like palm leaves.
Very proud of herself. A real killer.

[26] Women, including the gods' dancing-girls, covered their breasts with saffron.

[27] This verse also appears in Śrīnātha's *Bhīmakhaṇḍamu* 3.41 with reference to the appropriate moment for Vyāsa and his disciples to enter Dakṣârāma to worship in the temple. Here the awaited moment is Mañcana Śarma's rendezvous with his lover. See discussion in the introduction.

Seated majestically at the entrance of her hovel, on a bamboo stool,
she's a honey to plebeian playboys, and full of juice,
love's deadliest weapon—a basket-weaving whore.

Her narrow home on the outskirts
is an ornament of brass
for the goddess of this grand city,
and for the Love-God it serves
as a gymnasium.

On her extra-long bamboo bed,[28]
with a head on either side, she has happily
fucked thousands.

Ever since that customer walked out the back door
with the bag of silver—all her savings—
she clutches her money, hidden in her sari,
even while fucking.

[*As they go farther:*]

A soft smile playing on her cheeks,
flashing glances from the corners of her eyes,
all light and movement,
an Outcaste beauty comes to clean herself
after her period.
Deadly as love.[29]

As they go along, Govinda Mañcana Śarma sees a Karṇāṭi woman[30] and says:

'God loaded you down with two heavy weights—
your hips and your breasts—and now you also
have that pot full of water to carry.'
She laughs with him, shaking her heavy, thick
black hair.

[28] As opposed to a rope-cot, which has a clearly demarcated head and foot, the bamboo cot is unmarked: each side could be used as the head.

[29] This verse is a parody of Śrīnātha's lyrical description of an Untouchable woman bathing after her period: *Śivarātrimāhātmyamu* 3.32.

[30] Probably a Kannadiga, from the Karṇāṭaka region in the western Deccan.

They proceed through the bazaar:

> In the private section of the weekly market,
> a certain woman is hawking
> sticky balls kept in an ivory box,
> held in her left hand. She is yelling,
> '*Susarabhet*!' Women seem to want it.

Mañcana Śarma asks his merchant companion: 'What is she yelling about? You must know. Tell me the details.'

> The merchant looks at him with a bashful smile:
> 'You're such an adept lover—and you don't know?
> This is that special cream women use for pleasure.
> Like a gentle breeze, it blows away the hairy cover
> above their house of love.
>
> Like the smooth back of Lord Viṣṇu when he became a tortoise.
> Like the clean-shaven head of the first Jina, who emerged at the start of time.
> Like a copper pot upside-down, washed clean and burnished to a sheen.
> Like the smooth high forehead of the Brahmin,
> after he has applied Ganges mud and washed it away.
> As beautiful as it used to be at the first menstruation.
> Just apply that *susarabhet*, and the house of love is revived.

Because it cuts through hair,[31] and is made from a gentle tree sap, it is called *su-sara-bhet*, that is, 'good-hair-remover.' Delicate women use it over and over to uproot the forest of hair that blocks the doorway to love.' And they move on.

Still at the outer edge of the city, in the peasants' neighborhood, they see a lovely young woman crouching in the Cock Posture, wearing a sari with dark red stripes. Her skin is glistening like a *cāmpeya* flower in full bloom as the early sunlight touches her.

[31] *sara-bhedana*.

As if she were playing ball,
or demonstrating how well she can make love on top,
this peasant girl is shaping cowdung balls
at the doorway to her house
in the gentle morning glow,
buttocks, breasts, earrings, and hair
all moving in rhythm.

'Her dark eyebrows have no makeup.
No teasing smiles on her cheeks.
Eyes without coquetry.
It's so refreshing to see a farmer's wife!'

As they proceed through the street, they see another Karṇāṭaka woman, followed closely by her servant-girl.

[*Ṭiṭṭibha*:]

'Look at this woman!
Bright yellow sari, necklace
of three strings on her sumptious breasts,
braid rubbing against her nape.
Some man made love to her wildly
all night long. She's worn out.
She can hardly walk.[32]

Like a colt ridden hard and then let go,
this Karnāṭa callgirl is staggering along,
all passion spent.

'One more time. And one more.
And again. Just this last time.
You're the fruit of all my vows.'—
He kept her busy all four watches of the night
with the secret rituals of Desire. No wonder
every cell of her body
is exhausted.'

[32] This verse is quoted in *Appakavīyamu* 3.139 because of the *n* in the conjunct consonant *-nva* at the beginning of the fourth line, which chimes with a later *ṇ* in *ṛṇa*.

Govinda Mañcana Śarma, with a gentle laugh, crosses his hands and touches his earlobes with his fingers, with their *darbha*-grass rings.[33] Bowing to her, he mentions his name and lineage—the *Pūtimāṣa-gotra*, 'family of sacred black-gram'[34]—and says:

'May I perform the rite of squeezing
your magnificent pyramids of pleasure?
May I carry out the meaning
of the verbal root "to kiss",
on your rubescent lips?
Your girdle holds the secret
of ultimate reality as revealed
in the ancient Upaniṣad named Desire.
May I touch it, my Carnatic mistress?

Birds,[35] that swoop down
as they perch, are no match
for your breasts, that never droop.
Fish trapped in nets cannot rival
your eyes, that net lovers.'

She answers:

'Enough of your fancy jokes.
You look like a Brahmin from Kāsalnāḍu.
Unless you have some golden coins wrapped in your shawl,
stop messing around. Karṇāṭaka women
are no fools, to be toyed with.
You can't sweet-talk us, like you do at home.

You merchant! This Brahmin is showing off
in the middle of the street. Bring him tonight, and we'll watch him
make love. We'll bet: his sacred thread
for my new necklace.'

The writing style, that separates the final nasal of line 3 from the initial consonant of line 4, masks this alliteration.

[33] Respectful greeting to a person worthy of great honor.

[34] *Pūti* normally means 'putrid' or 'rotten,' but can also mean 'pure' (*pūta*, from Sanskrit √*pū*). We translate as 'sacred,' with ironic implication. Needless to say, no such *gotra* exists among Brahmins.

[35] Specifically the *cakravāka*, to which breasts are usually compared.

[*Mañcana Śarma*:]

'What if you hide your face with a veil?
I can tell you're excited by your dancing earrings of pearl.
You may bend your head low, but the radiance
of your smile still reflects off your cheeks.
Even if you don't look at me, I can feel your eyes
right through the lovely lids.
Cover your breasts if you wish, but you can't efface
their firm lines or mask their fullness.
You're just pretending to be shy,
just to spoil my fun. What do you get
from tricking me? You'd do better
to crown me King of Love.
Give me a hug, my Deccan Queen.'[36]

With this, Govinda Mañcana Śarma smiles and walks away, with his friend.

People crowd in a circle, pressing closer to watch,
kibbitzing, with free—and bad—advice,
as gamblers bet like fools
and lose, and keep on playing
with false pride. Govinda, women all around him,
is aroused.

This is a lousy game of dice.
Win or lose, you keep playing.
You make jokes, talk dirty.
It all hangs on those wooden tokens,
scattered all over the board.[37]
Anyone who gets sucked in
will be left with nothing but his underwear.

[36] *karaṇa-kānta* apparently = *karnāṭa kānta* (above).

[37] *akalitântarā-valaya-kakṣyā-bhāga-mudrā-lasad-bhaṅgī-niṣṭhita-kāṣṭha-śaṅkukamu*—perhaps the circular pits of the mancala board (Telugu: *vāmana-guṇṭalu*). Alternatively, and more likely, the reference is to a game like pachisi (Telugu: *sŏgaṭālu*), with an empty square or space in the middle where the players' tokens are gathered.

'This time you'll win,' says the owner
of the gambling joint, as he goes from one to one,
preying on the innocent—anything to keep them going
so he can make a kill.

Suddenly they hear a sweet voice, as if in harmony with the strains of the *vina* that the Goddess of Arts plucks with her gentle fingers:

Her hair, dishevelled, rubs against her voluptuous breasts.
A silver armlet, marked with three signs of the *liṅga*,
presses against her skin, near the shoulder.
Her pleated sari, loosely worn, spreads a single thin layer
that barely covers her gleaming thighs.
Earrings, like ripening leaves, reflect off the surface
of her glistening cheeks.
In an alleyway in Orugallu, in a high voice,
like the cuckoo repeating its haunting note,
this Carnatic lady from beyond the mountains
is selling perfumed oil.[38]

Look at this charming little parrot,
this woman who runs the oilpress.
When she speaks, honey spills.
When she looks at you, lightning shimmers.
She must be from Mulikināḍu, my friend.

With her soft lotus eyes,
she perches expertly on the pole, and goads
the ox that turns the oilpress
round and round. Does she not remind you
of the Goddess of Wealth whirling around
the Ocean of Milk when it is churned
by the wild mountain?

If you tap her breasts, they go 'ping'—
so taut they resonate.
Her voice can drive you mad.
And that lingering walk . . .

[38] *sampĕṅga nūnĕ*, *campaka* oil.

God gave her all this
and then he made her an oilmonger,
not a courtesan. Makes you want to hit
the bastard.'

Towards the north they see the army quarters, with garlands of flowers, expertly cut, hanging on high, and cuckoos, geese and rainbirds arranged in formation.

'He measures her breasts with his fingers,
extended from thumb to pinky.
From the corner of his eye
he studies them, up and down,
focusing his eyes, again and again,
on her armpits. He smiles and flirts,
this tailor who wants to be a lover,
with desire in his heart,
and never finishes the blouse for the whore.'

Passing through that quarter, they turn north. Inside a certain house, they see a lovely woman:

'Why do you keep on killing lice,
one by one, with your red fingernails,
going through layer after layer
of your friend's long hair, hissing
sweetly as you squish them?
Isn't it sin enough, my lovely lady,
that your exquisite breasts
are killing me?'

In front of that house,

Like the wild lovemaking they call 'mortar and pestle,'[39]
with the woman on top, her hair dancing
on her back, sumptuous breasts swinging,
she squats on her haunches, grinding turmeric
into paste, glass bangles on both her arms
ringing in perfect harmony.

[39] *kharva-kharjū*—obscure. We read *kharva* < *khalva*, mortar. *kharjū* can mean 'scratching, itching'; perhaps, 'a billion itches'.

They leave this place and cross the crossroads[40] in the outer city.[41]
They see the rocky moat, a highway
from the deepest Nether World to heaven.
They reach the great wall reaching up to the stars,
whose end you cannot see.
They enter into the inner gateway with its sharp turns,
humming with people, a dense epitome of the world.
Slowly they pass through the main gateway with its immense golden doors,
like the Golden Mountain with two shimmering wings.

It is all they can do to avoid the traffic—
chariots, horses, carts, and elephants—
on their way into Orugallu.

Mañcana Śarma to the honored merchant called Ṭiṭṭibha:

'The main drag is buzzing
with elephants, horses, carts, and a million soldiers.
Dusty, too.
Let's avoid it.
The alleyways are much quieter,
and also full of fun. Best of all is the street that goes right through the bordellos, where lovers gather. We'll pick the whores
we like best and hang out with them. By then it will be afternoon.
Then we can have a good time in the Sisters' Quarter.[42]'

[40] *vīthī-viṭaṅkamu*, a crossroads in the middle of the street? Cf. Śiva at Tiruvarur, Vīti-viṭaṅkaṉ (usually derived from Tamil *viṭaṅku*, 'beauty'). On *viṭaṅka*, see Rajeshwari Ghose, *The Tyāgarāja Cult in Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 29–38. Phillip Wagoner suggests, following the gloss in *Sūrya-rāyândhra-nighaṇṭuvu*, *s.v.*, as *kapota-pālika*, that *vīthī-viṭaṅka* refers first to the 'ubiquitous reflex-curved eave' of medieval Deccani architecture and then, metonymically, to a street edged with such eaved colonnades (private communication, 27.7.2001). Cf. Śrīnātha, *Bhīma-khaṇḍamu* 3.212.

[41] *bāhya-kaṭaka*—an army camp outside the earthen walls? The text now seems to describe a progression across the big moat [*ganapa parikha*] through the earthen wall, and then to the *vaṅka-dāra*, the inner gateway, and the *pĕdda gavani*, main gate. For *ganapa*, cf. *kanapa*/*kanuma*, passageway between hilly areas.

[42] *akkalavāḍa*—apparently a place where both women and food can be found

Ṭiṭṭibha agrees. They follow the lower road along the wall, under the embankment.[43] The Brahmin sees the complex of buildings housing the Śiva-liṅga that is god to the Palnāḍu heroes.

A woman is singing the story of the heroes[44]
in *dvipada* couplets, with an inner cadence[45] to the lines,
and proper breaks,[46] in the fast rhythm,[47]
to the pounding beat of the little drum,[48]
and at every syllable, young men become possessed
with a scream.

Yelling, one strikes himself with a heavy sword,[49] standing firm.
Drawing himself up, with feet apart, one dances with his spear.[50]
Eyes bulging, terrifying to see, another lets out a scream.
One leaps high into the air, slapping his powerful shoulders.
One man eggs on the others to ever greater feats.
Another dances like a horse[51] in the open space.
All this while the woman sings of the Palnāḍu heroes
during the ritual,[52] as she plucks the strings.[53]

The sixty-five heroes of Palnāḍu, all courage, have Gaṅgâmba of Gurijāla
as their family deity, with Potulayya of the Battle[54] as their friend.

(cf. 189, *akkavāḍa*, for the latter). Cooks and whores may be conflated (Brahmin widows).

[43] *āluvari*—a round earthen embankment? a parapet (*koṭa-kŏmmu* [Singaracarya])?

[44] Today only men sing the Palnāḍu epic.

[45] *yati-grāma*.

[46] *yati-kūḍan*, the caesura.

[47] *druta-tāḷa*, a specific beat.

[48] *gumphitaka?* Probably a small drum covered in leather, with an attached string plucked to make the leather produce sound.

[49] *vīra-sambĕṭa-kola*: today in Palnāḍu, this weapon is called *sambĕṭa*.

[50] *kunta*—today, *koṇatamu*.

[51] *bhañjaḷḷu*—galloping like a horse.

[52] *kŏluvu*—ritual worship (of the Palnāḍu heroes). The term is still in use today. The early part of the description is still accurate for current performances in Palnāḍu.

[53] *kŏḍumu*, probably a wooden piece held in the fingers to draw a sound out of the *gumphitaka* drum.

[54] Anapotu Rāju.

The evil counsel of Āruvalli Nāyurālu,
the cock-fight, and the common meal on the mat—
these were the main reasons for the final destruction
of all the great Palnāḍu heroes.[55]

Yellow turmeric paste, *bālamu* rice,
garlands of red flowers,
thick hair bound up in a bun,
heavy swords[56] with tassles,
freshly washed long cloth around their waist—
these are the well-known adornments for the young heroes.

Nallaṅgŏṇḍa and Nāgarikallu are famous in the world.[57]
Palleru and Nāguleru mark the boundaries of Palnāḍu.

'Just here, united, the local kings ate on a single mat.
Here is where Ārvĕlli Nāyurālu thought out her strategy.
Here Pilasani bathed in a river of fire to show her truthfulness.[58]
Here the cowherd cousins fought one another,
with the land as their wager.[59]
Here the five great warriors fell in furious battle.'
This is how the village elders speak of history,
pointing out place after place.

Power came to that region[60] because Mācĕla Cĕnnuḍu[61]
and the Liṅga of Śrīsáilam[62] watched it with compassion.
Otherwise, even if it rained at the right moment,
could a mustard seed grow
on those flat rocks?

[55] For these events, see the synopsis by Gene Roghair, *The Epic of Palnāḍu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

[56] *sambĕṭa*—or anklets?

[57] It is not clear why these Telangana towns are associated with Palnāḍu, unless it is to provide an analogy with the boundaries of Palnāḍu—Palleru and Nāguleru.

[58] Story unknown.

[59] Another story—or a confusion with the Kāṭamarāju story.

[60] The original ms. reads *mulki-nāḍu* for *pallĕ-viṣayamu* [= Palnāḍu].

[61] Cĕnnakeśvara-Viṣṇu of Mācĕla in Palnāḍu.

[62] Śiva-Mallikârjuna, who plays a role in th Palnāḍu epic.

Why praise those mad heroes who march off to battle
as lions among men? In that land,
the real lions are the insatiable
peasant women with big breasts
who make love on top of their men.

They have painted the story of Brahma Nāyuḍu and the other heroes on a plastered slate set up near that spear[63] by the triangular frame[64] where they place their weapons.

Let these heroes bless us in our endeavours. Let's go.'

A few paces on, they see a temple to Ekavīra,[65] its gateway decorated with garlands of margosa leaves.

'I bow to the mother of Viṣṇu, with snakes adorning her,
the sun, moon, and fire for her eyes, Mother of the universe,
worshiped by gods, sages, Siddhas,
the beautiful wife of Jamadagni, the daughter of the Mountain,[66]
ever-auspicious, her hair dark as bees,
the Ādiśakti, essence of Veda and Vedânta,
Ekavīra, the Single Heroine, mother of all.

She adorns the Bhārgava family.
At the juncture of the Treta and Dvāpara Ages,
she lived for many years with her husband.[67]
Through her son, born after a long time,
she destroyed all kings twenty-one times.
She made a necklace from the teeth of the Haihaya king
and wore it around her neck.
She left[68] the villages of Maṇḍapāka, Pĕnubāka,
Mahuramu, Nāgavaramu, and Polāsa.

[63] *kola.*

[64] *trikkaṭi.*

[65] One of the goddesses of Orugallu, usually identified with Reṇukā. Note the non-parodic verses in praise of the goddess.

[66] Pārvatī.

[67] Presumably Jamadagni, the sage known to the classical tradition as the husband of Reṇukā.

[68] *anicĕn*—'to send off,' but perhaps also 'to destroy.'

Now she lives in Orugallu.
Ekavīra is the side-kick of Kākatamma.

Cantankerous, she can make any queen a widow.
She's the enchantress from Pĕnubāka who fulfils the love of
Jamadagni.
She's the angry mother of a son[69] who made a world of warriors
empty of warriors.
Irascible, she possesses women when the story-singers[70] tell her
story,
plucking the *javanika* strings.
Mother who gives birth to idiots in a basket:[71]
she swims in the Kadulla Stream.
She lives in Polāsa: this is Māhuramma,
A woman who enjoys praise.

Holding the *javanika*, source of surpassing sound,[72] under his arm,
his voice in harmony with the music pouring out from the strings,
he develops the *ālāpa*[73] in various *rāgas*—pure, doubled and mixed[74]—
and cutting into it with the drum-beats,
the virtuoso Emperor of Street-singers stands in front of Ekavīra
and sings all the stories of Paraśurāma, to his great fame.[75]

An Outcaste woman, bells tied to her drum,[76]
sings of Ekavīra, mother of all the worlds.
At every flourish, the Love-God fills the music with life
and the full-throated sweetness of the cuckoo.

Hoping for a state of purity, in the fullness of feeling,
people worship this one Mother, the source of all feeling,

[69] Paraśurāma.

[70] *bavanīlu*.

[71] Unclear. *pallika*—open basket; *debĕ*—idiot. Perhaps this refers to clay figures of children held in a basket and raised by a woman other than the mother—as we see today in the Gangamma *jātra* in Tirupati.

[72] Ironic: high-flown epithets for the simple folk instrument.

[73] Improvisation within the terms of the *rāga*.

[74] *śuddha*, *sāḷaga* [one *rāga* having a touch or shade of another], and *saṅkīrṇa* rāgas.

[75] Many lexical questions in this verse remain unresolved.

[76] *maḍu* = *maḍḍu*, a drum [Monier-Williams].

Ekavīramma[77], Māhuramma, held in the syllable *hrīm*,
as they dance to drums, cymbols, and *javanika* strings.

You can't worship the goddess without looking, but if I look,
deep in devotion, you know what will happen—
I'll be deep in passion. What shall I do, my friend?
Shall we look or not? The priestesses[78] worshiping this goddess
are all naked below the waist.

Wearing a coarse, starched[79] red sari, with check design,
bunched up between her legs,
with a sandal dot topped with vermilion on her forehead,
tender margosa buds woven into a garland over her heavy breasts,
red betel coloring her freshly brushed teeth,
all her limbs alive with light,
a little drunk, so rather bold,
energy and grace spilling over,
a peasant woman has come to town.'

After bowing to Ekavīra, they move on.

In a high-pitched soprano, the Jakkula woman sings
to the accompaniment of an angular instrument,
striking with a stick the dark spot on the drum,
smeared with *bonamu*.[80]
To elevate the drum's pitch, she tightens the keys.
Bells harmonize with the rhythm
as she jumps from one *rāga* to another,
the *uruma* drum[81] set on her thighs,
singing the story of Kāmavalli,[82] who is Lakṣmī,
in her love for Viṣṇu.

[77] Ekavīra.

[78] *śambhaḷī*. Cf. Śrīnātha, *Bhīma-khaṇḍamu* 2.127 [referring to the priestesses of Viśālākṣī in Kāśī].

[79] *cari* = *gañji*, starch.

[80] *bonamu*: the sticky dark substance used to smear the center of the drum.

[81] modern *kañjīra*, a small drum with circular metal pieces built into its rim.

[82] The story of Kāmavalli or Kāmeśvari underlies a popular ritual, *kāmeśvari-kŏlupu*, now carried out by Brahmin families.

There is one woman, among seven sisters sitting on separate planks.[83]
A brush of feathers in her hand, jeweled rings on her fingers,
her waist, thin from fasting, quivering under her breasts,
her eyes, bright as comets, belying her shyness:
the folds of her white-silk sari slip from place,
and you get a glimpse of brilliant thighs
as she dances, more and more excited,
to the throbbing music.

Now all seven are dancing wildly. What a sight!
Their minds are burning as the flute calls louder,
they are crying out with it,
they might break in two at the waist
because of their full, high breasts.

Perhaps the master of this house is sponsoring this rite of the Yakṣa women in order to remove any obstacle to obtaining children. May these goddesses, of the Maṇibhadra lineage, along with Kāmavalli Śrīmahā-lakṣmī, give us all we desire.' Bowing to them with deep faith, Kāsalnāṭi Govinda Mañcana Śarma moves on, with his friend.

Suddenly: the sound of the water-buffalo horn
in three pitches—low, medium, high—
and pounding beats of the drum and bell.[84]
'What's this explosion of sound?' asks Ṭiṭṭibha.

'They walk over bright burning coals in the firepit.
Swinging from nets over a field of spears planted, point up, in the earth,
they cut themselves loose and fall.
They sew hooks into their skin and bone and swing high in the sky.
They grasp a sharp sword[85] with a golden handle, they swallow it without fear.

[83] Seven women embodying the goddesses known as the Sapta-māṭrkās, the Seven Mothers or Sisters.

[84] *ḍiṇḍima*—uncertain.

[85] *gaṇḍa-kattĕra* is more often a vise or scissors in which one inserts his head and then cuts it off.

Some put needles through their joints.
Others burn camphor in the palms of both hands.
They're the very embodiment of adventure, strong at heart,
soldiers of Mailāru.[86]

These devotees of Mailāradevara are dancing the *gŏṇḍli* dance.
Look, a girl is dancing, too, shaking her head.[87] She's hardly
bigger
than a nail.

Bending backwards, she dips her head into a trough of water,
fishes out a nose-ring, slips it on her nose, and sits up.
With her tongue, she strings black beads into a chain.
She's incomparable. Where did she learn these tricks?

Here is Mailāradeva, who lives in Orugallu.
Likes Saturdays. Helps good people. Gives gifts.
Enjoys Sundays, too. Wears a fresh sari.[88]
Plays with illusion. Husband of Māḷavi. Famous everywhere.
Paḷḷĕmma's man. King of all gods. Lord of hunters.[89]
Master of the armoury.[90] Compassionate. Master of the city.
Brags[91] he can measure fog with a measuring vessel,
and tie down magical deer.
Companion to Bhairava: may he bless us.

[86] On the male deity Mailāru, see G.D. Sontheimer, *Birobā, Mhaskobā und Khaṇḍobā: Ursprung, Geschichte und Umwelt von pastoralen Gottheiten in Maharastra* (Wiesbaden: Stein, 1976).

[87] Reading *murdhâbhinayamu*, with Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, *Śrīnāthuni vīthināṭakamu krīḍâbhirāmamu* (Muktyala, Kṛṣṇa District: Manimanjari, 1952), commentary to this verse.

[88] *māḍa-cīra-maṇuṅgu* ˙*māḍa* = a coin [*Sūrya-rāyândhra nighaṇṭuvu:* = 10 *rūpāyulu*] or a kind of sari. Cf. verse 120 above, where the Palnāḍu heroes have 'freshly washed long cloth' (*krŏtta maṇuṅgu*) around their waist. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri emends to *māḍaci-ramaṇuṇḍu*, 'lover of Māḍaci,' which remains opaque.

[89] *kanapa* < *kanumu*, 'arrow,' or < *kanuma*, 'mountain pass.'[For the latter, see 101].

[90] *katra-śāla* is unknown. Perhaps *katra* < *kṣatra*.

[91] *bāsavĕlli*—uncertain. *bāsa*: an oath or a boast.

Look! In the middle of the city, they have planted a lion flag.
Garlands of margosa leaves over the doorways.
It's clearly a festival time. Women, young and old,
have set pots full of water in the crossroads.[92]

The outcaste devotees (*āsādulu*)[93] are excited, fully drunk and entirely pure:

'Hey young woman, sister, goddess. Look this way.'
Beating, thumping, on drums and cymbals: 'zum-zum-zum.'

They go on.

'There's the Bhairava shrine. A little beyond it, Camaḍeśvari,[94] the great *śakti*.
The entrance pavilion to the Vīrabhadra temple. There's the Buddhist *vihāra*.
Young Musānamma's shrine. Kŏmarasāmayya[95] has his temple.
And there is one for the Pāṇḍavas. To the south of it, the Turks' mosque,
where Allah[96] lives. If you go a little further, you come to great towers,
with golden cupolas shining in the sunlight,
like the peaks of the Golden Mountain: these are the temples
of Keśava and Śrī-Svayambhū, Self-born Śiva.'

As they go on, they see a Bhairava shrine.

[*Govinda Mañcana Śarma*:]

'When you beat one beat with your powerful arms
on the drum you hold, it shakes a little,
and the whole ocean is stirred:
turtles are overturned, fish go crazy,
crocodiles leap high, whales

[92] *vīthī-vīṭaṅkamu*. Cf. 111 above.
[93] Madiga Untouchables.
[94] Now known as Cauḍamma.
[95] Kumāra-svāmi.
[96] *Kartāruḍu* = *kartā*, God the Creator in south Indian Muslim texts.

jump the surf, and female tortoises
are pounded by the waves,
great Bhairava!'

They look up and notice that it is midday.

'Space itself is on fire.
Perched on the edge of the wasteland
blazing like sunstones that glow in the sun,
hotter than the sun, lapwings are crying.
The bees fear to touch the lotus flowers
growing in the ponds, their nectar heated
to boiling.'

Turning his ear to the sky, Govinda Mañcana Śarma acts listening:

'In the entrance to the palace of the Āndhra king,
whose spires touch the stars,
the clock has struck two-times-eight
with its clear chimes. The sun is moving
westward. Shall we go, my friend, and order
dinner in the inn?[97] We're hungry, aren't we?

If you think about it, it's also a good place for us to rest.

In this city, the Love-God is busy, day and night, in that inn,
negotiating for whores and their customers,
causing quarrels, making peace, sealing the deal.'[98]

Walking a little ways, they see a Brahmin walking toward them:

'This man, chewing soft betel leaves,
must have eaten up to his neck. Now he's looking
for a woman. Must be a lover from the Karaṇa country,
a Brahmin. If we talk to him, we'll find out the going rate.

[97] *pūṭa-kūṭ'illu*, 'meal-house', where daily meals are served—as in the modern Indian usage, 'hotel.'

[98] *sandhi*, *vigraha*, *yāna*—technical terms drawn from the domain of politics and diplomacy and applied to the politics of love.

The house he's coming out of must be the Brahmin meal-house. You know why?

> There's a certain smell you get
> when a pestle rubs against the mortar,
> and it's filling my nostrils now.
> And the strong smell of spices
> the Brahmin women use in seasoning
> permeates the air.'

[*Stage-Manager*:]

> Govinda Mañcana Śarma, of the Sacred Black-Gram Lineage,
> approaches this Brahmin from the Karaṇa land
> who is walking slowly, in a dignified manner,
> on his fancy new shoes, sewn with leather,[99]
> that make music at each step.

He asks him for details about the 'hotel', and the Brahmin asks:

> 'Is it for food and sex together,
> or just for food,
> or just for sex?
> What are you looking for?
> Give me a clue.
>
> If it's for food,
> luxurious camphor rice,
> delicious dishes from fresh wheat-flour,
> a whole cup of sugar,
> ghee from cow-milk freshly boiled,
> yellow lentils, ripe bananas,
> four or five side-dishes,
> leaf-cups full of fresh curds—
> you get all this for one rupee[100]
> in the house of Lakṣmaṇa the Brahmin.

[99] *kirru-cĕppulu*—sandals which make the '*kirru*' noise as one walks, indicating high status. In Āndhra villages, only the Karaṇam and the Nāyuḍu could wear them.

[100] *rūkakun*: we could also translate, 'you get all this, but you have to pay.' In a culture where selling food was something of a taboo, this description of a *pūṭa-kūṭ'illu*,

If it's for sex,

young short-haired widows[101]
with thin waist, full breasts,
darting eyes, jewels of women:
we thank the god
who set them loose.

Yes, there are many Brahmin widows in this world,
but this one, here:
let's put aside her gracefulness,
her voluptuous play, her winning pride;
what puts to shame
the gold on the forehead
of our ever-so-rich king
is the color of her cunt.

Melodious as the cuckoo, this princess of a widow
sings with love
all six books of the women's *Rāmāyaṇa*[102]
during Viṣṇu's night.[103]
God help me!
Forgive my thoughts:[104]
is anyone her equal?'

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Our Mañci, noble scion of the Sacred Black-Gram lineage,
and his friend gorge themselves in Lakṣmaṇa's house
as they check out a gorgeous playgirl.
'We'll come back: we're busy now,' they say, on leaving.

'day-meal house' (157), may be rather shocking. Only much later, in the early twentieth century, did such institutions become common in Āndhra.

[101] Widows shaved their hair.

[102] *reading viddikūci* (corrected from *viddicūci* of the original ms.), a women's version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

[103] Singaracarya: *ekādaśi*, the eleventh day of the 15-day cycle; Śrīvaiṣṇavas fast on *ekādaśi* day.

[104] expletives, uttered in horror at his own fantasy: *namaś śivāya śāntāya samasta-doṣa-haraṇāya*.

As they move on,

a flower-girl gives this Brahmin
the most fragrant of all her flowers,
the *ketakī*, covered with thorny leaves
that hook women whose husbands have gone away,
its outer petals more green than emerald,
its surface wiped clean of insects,
the inner petals like sixteen shades of gold,
and deep inside, pollen white as the ashes of Desire,
burnt by the god.

Govinda Mañcana Śarma, seeing this:

'Her one regret is having no chance
to couple up with the new moon. Other than that,
she's not disturbed that Śiva rejected her
so unwisely.[105] What a brilliant flower!
Is there no other god[106]
to take her?'

Giving the flower-girl a gift
and a leaf to each of the Brahmins nearby,
our Brahmin dandy puts the softest of the inner petals
in his hair.

They come to the entrance to the courtesans' quarter, like the opening blessing in the drama of Love's universal conquest of his foes.

They are sprinkling sandal water in the courtyard.
With Kashmir saffron they are making colorful *mruggu*[107]
and with camphor powder, white *raṅgavalli* designs.
In every doorway, they are hanging lotuses.

'Whose house is this? It's the epitome of festivity,' Mañcanna asks the people around (staring at the sky).[108]

[105] When the *ketakī* flower falsely supported Brahmā's claim to have seen the top of the *śivaliṅga*, Śiva cursed the flower never to be associated with him or his worship; hence it has no chance to get close to the crescent moon on his crest.

[106] *pĕrumāḷḷu*: usually Viṣṇu.

[107] Threshold designs made by women in front of the door to the house.

[108] Stage direction. The following verse is apparently sung by someone offstage.

'Have you come from outer space? O Brahmin: may God
forgive you. She is famous all over the world
as the great preceptor of love as laid down
in the Vedic Science of Desire. She won the highest respect
of the assembly of scholars, presided over
by the King himself, Pratāpa-rudra. Don't you recognize
this Mācaldevi, the well-known whore?

She's inaugurating her picture palace. This is the moment the Brahmins begin to chant, to purify the day. Everything is green and auspicious. You, too, can come to see this reception hall,[109] and join the festivities.'

[*Mañcana says*:]

'That's good, my merchant friend. In times to come,
they'll play the story of this woman on the stage.
Let's check her out. This invitation is our pretext—
and we have nothing to lose.'

[*Stage-Manager*:]

They enter the picture palace, in the stylized dance-mode. Now Mañcana Śarma, of the famous Sacred Black-Gram lineage, sees Mācaldevi sitting on a bed of down, adorned from head to foot, a veritable treasure of grace, seductive charm, and movement.

[*Mañcana Śarma*:]

'Blessings on your breasts, freshly marked
by your lovers' fingernails, and more lovely
than the temples of an elephant in heat
bloodied by the driver's goad.

It's no lie to say
you're more famous than the Delhi Sultan.[110]
And what difference is there between you

[109] *pili-kūṭamu* is unclear but appears to be the whore's chambers, as one can see from the punning verse below (187). The editors have emended, unconvincingly, to *pĕṇḍli-kūṭamu*, a wedding hall.

[110] *ḍhilli-suratāṇi*. Singaracarya thinks this refers to the Sultan's wife; Nāyaka-period usage of *suratāṇi* = both Indra and Indrāṇī; an imperial king.

and the Goddess of Wealth, even if you weren't
born from the ocean?'

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Mācâmba of Orugallu, with her striking eyes,
looks at the Brahmin, Mañci,[111]
who has the very form of Love,
and, with a jingling of bangles, bows and says,
'Greetings,[112] Sir.'

[*Mañcana Sarma*:]

'Steeped with incense inside,
woman, may your house of love
under the canopy of Desire
comfort the lovers of Orugallu City.
Not every woman has such a well-built home!'

When he says this, she asks,
'Where are you from, sir?'
'From Kāsalnāḍu.'
'And who are you?'
'I'm the son of Mādhava of Sacred Black-Gram lineage.'
'And your good name?'
'They call me Govinda Mañcana Śarma.'
'What brings you here?'
'To favor people like you.'
'In that case, please have a seat.'
'First we must bathe and pray.'
'Where do you go to do that?'
'Since I'm a Brahmin, I go where the cooking women live.'[113]

[111] The Stage-Manager refers to Mañcana Śarma here by the endearing diminutive, 'Mañci'—an indication that Mācaldevi has sized him up.

[112] *johārulu*.

[113] *akka-vāḍa* < *akka*, a woman. *Akka-vāḍa* may be the cooks' quarters, according to Bandaru Tammayya—or, alternatively, the courtesans' neighborhood.

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Govinda Śarma describes the pictures in the palace to Ṭiṭṭibha:

'Look, here's the Forest of Pines, and here are Śiva and the sages' wives.
Look at Brahmā and his golden daughter. There is their bed of love.
Kṛṣṇa is here, with the cowgirls on the sandy bank of the Yamunā River.
Here is Ahalyā, and the king of the gods[114]—and the inside of the hut.
Here are the Moon and Tārā, his guru's wife;
the fisher-girl,[115] and the sage Parāśara;
Viśvāmitra and the girl who dances in Indra's court[116]—
this palace celebrates the triumph of Desire.

Desire, armed with his bow of sugar-cane,
is resting on Rati's breasts, stroking them
with his flower-arrows to shape
their perfect curves, as that devil of a painter
strokes them, over and over, with his fine brush.
He should be given the joy
of untying the knot.'[117]

They emerge from that palace. But Mañcana is still searching for his earlier flame. After passing a few houses, he sees a pavilion that he recognizes by its sinduvāra vine. Entering the familiar entrance, he is met by servants and maidservants. In the inner part, he finds the chief courtesan, busy with preparations for the festival.[118] He is seated and given all the honors of a guest.

[114] Indra, who assumed the form of Gautama, Ahalyā's husband, in order to make love to her.

[115] Satyavatī.

[116] Menakā.

[117] *īvi* = *nīvi*, the knot of the sari.

[118] Of looking in the mirror—a life-cycle ritual for courtesans.

[*Mañcana Śarma*:]

'All the relatives are here. Is it a ritual occasion,
or pilgrimage to a temple, or a festival?
What are we celebrating in our house?'
'Yes,' she says, 'it is a celebration, my celibate friend:
Today, in the early afternoon, under the auspicious star
of Puṣya, your dear daughter will look in the mirror.

You must chant the blessings for your daughter at that time,
so that she has long life, beauty, wisdom, skill, and splendor.

Without beginning with the ritual of looking in the mirror,
no courtesan can take a customer.
Can a Brahmin start a sacrifice
without first rubbing the firesticks?

For us who live on our looks, the mirror
is the Goddess of Luck. It belongs in the *gandharva* class.
After all, all doctrines of illusion[119]
take the mirror as proof.

When the moon is full in spring,
and the cuckoos are softly cooing
the melodious fifth note of passion,
your daughter will take the vow
of defloration. It's only ten days from now.
You must stay here for that purpose,
in our quarter, you handsome man.

Here's your girl, Love-Streak.[120]
She has the pride of great beauty,
and a touch of wildness.
She takes after her father.
Experts who read her hands
predict a lucky future. And they're right,

[119] *vivarta-vāda*—such as Advaita, stating the oneness of reality and the illusory projection of external phenomena from within, like phenomena reflected in the mirror. *gandharva-gaṇamu*, at the end of the first line, is a class of objects within a wider classification system.

[120] Madana-rekha.

as we can see by the fact that you came.
You're her father, you make things happen.
You're a teacher, a man of good intentions,
a great lover of new whores, a fine fellow.
You'll seat her on your lap and show her that mirror,
dear Mañci.'[121]

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Putting the shiny mirror in his hand,
Love-Streak sits happily in Mañci's lap,
her face shining—the face that had conquered
the moon and now held him prisoner.

Mañci whispers in her ear the mantra 'Wealth to wealth'
and prompts Ṭiṭṭibha Sĕṭṭi to give her a silver coin,
to buy her turmeric.

Now the whore holds hands with the Brahmin and says,
remembering her former loving connection:

'Where have you been, Govinda, all these days?
How many women have you seduced, just like before,
and where? Thank God you remembered
this old place, where you once tasted my rice pudding.'

[*Govinda Mañcana Śarma*:]

During the harvest moon last year, the god of Kākuḷam,[122]
king of the Telugus, king of the gods,
was enjoying his festival, for the welfare of the world.
I went there, for the fun of it.

That young fellow, born
to the goddess of the bitter-gourd creeper,[123]
is the emperor of adulterers, thieves, and scoundrels. He's a good
customer
of the gods' whores, this Telugu king.

[121] Note the nickname/diminutive.

[122] Śrikākuḷam, in Kṛṣṇa District, home to the god known as Āndhra-Mahāviṣṇu.

[123] *kāravella-matallikā-kalpa-valli*. Cf. Kākati, the goddess associated with the *kākati* creeper; the Kākatīyas are thus her worshippers or descendants.

This Kākuḷeśvara is sick of warm milk
served in a golden cup
and has announced to the world
that he's in love
with this Brahmin girl.[124]

The Vedas show their distaste. The Purāṇas are embarrassed.
The Upaniṣads have lost their fragrance, and the Āgamas lag behind,
while Sirikākuḷanātha, born in the Brahmin Nāgadevabhaṭṭāraka's house,
is living it up.[125]

From the moment the flag is raised on the pole
until the flower chant[126] at the end, there,
on the banks of the Kṛṣṇā River, in an area twelve krośas
in circumference, throughout the festival,[127]
you can sleep with other men's wives, and things like that,
with God's permission. It's no sin.

You have to stretch your arms to the limit
just to enfold their breasts and buttocks.
They're enormous, those sex-starved
young widows of Vĕlanāḍu. Insatiable, too,
during the carnival at Kākuḷam.
Only a superman like Bhīma or Mandhātā
might be enough for them.

Lovers take the village widows,
suck fiercely on their lips,
crush against their breasts,
stick fingers deep into the house of love
until the juice of joy comes gushing out,

[124] This story seems to have been lost.

[125] The rationale for an apparently antinomian festival at Śrīkakuḷam: the god has taken a Brahmin lover.

[126] The *mantra-puṣpa* that often concludes rituals.

[127] *parva-kāla*—alternatively, during full-moon and new-moon days.

then they lift them up and carry them to the riverbank
and fuck them furiously—through all the festival nights.

When you have all these Brahmin widows,
cunts spongy as the soft core of the ripening palm,
day after day of the festival, whenever you want,
who needs whores?

If a Renouncer sees a young woman, Desire is ready to strike
with his arrow of soft basil[128] leaves.
If a widow catches sight of a Brahmin versed in the Vedas,
Love cuts him with the sharp blade of *darbha* grass.[129]
When a farmer notices a basket-weaving woman,
Passion prods him with a goad made of flowers.
Lust burns the woman who casts her eye on a goldsmith
with a firebrand of blossoms.
He—the hidden god—knows all these castes, as he strikes down
adulterers, with his various weapons, on every night of the festival
at just the right moment, when the moonlight flares
on the sandbanks of the Kṛṣṇā River.'[130]

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Suddenly Mañcana sees a group of these young widows, and
begins to bless them.

'I wish you long life, Mācakamma[131]—
though you've never grown into a woman, still you wear these silk
saris.
And this easy woman, always visiting the temple—
may her wishes come true.
Young widow with sex on the brain—I bless you with sons.
You wear thick basil garlands: may you enjoy good health.

[128] *Tulasi*, basil, is not one of the traditional arrows of Manmatha; the poet has added this 'sacred' plant to the Love-God's arsenal.

[129] *Darbha*, too—used in ritual contexts—now belongs to Manmatha.

[130] *Perakamma* = the river at Śrīkākuḷam.

[131] *mācakamma* (*māśakamma* in the original manuscript), a female who fails to mature into full womanhood.

All good fortune to every one of you whores.
Constant happiness will belong to this brazen woman.
This chatterbox: may she achieve all her desires.
And as for this hefty widow—she'll get laid.'

And he moves on.

Gandharvi[132] to Mañcana, with a crooked glance
ripe with jealousy:[133]
'After you've been sewed up by all those widows in foreign cities,
the ones you're addicted to, why should you think of us? Let's
go home.'

[*Mañcana Śarma*:]

'Your dancing breasts, your glistening eyes, brighter
than lightning in rain, the energy that moved you
when you lay on top of me
when you were young—my God, do you think there's any way
I could forget, even if I tried?

I'm just going to Āryavāṭika, the high-class neighborhood, on some business. May the mirror-ceremony for our Love-Streak prove to be auspicious. I'll see you around.'

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Our civilized friend heads westward, four hours before sunset.
Walking with his companion through the main street,
he listens for a while to the snake-charmers' drones.

The snakes are dancing, opening their hoods
as the music opens up the richness
of the rāgas, such as Nāgavarāḷi, flowing
out of the Nāgasvaram's holes.

[132] Bommakanti Venkata Singaracarya incorrectly identifies this woman, Mañcana Śarma's former lover who has now grown old, as Kāma-mañjari. He assumes that Kāma-mañjari, the present lover, is a *veśyā* and then illogically wonders why she needs to meet with her lover secretly (Introduction, xlvi).

[133] Reverting to the present, after Mañcana has temporarily entered into his own inset description of Śrīkākuḷam.

Beloved child of Kadrū Devī,[134]
the ocean bed of Lord Viṣṇu,
Śiva's anklet of victory,
the reins on the Sun's chariot,
the largest planet in the Milky Way,[135]
coiled at the source of the Tree of Life,[136]
Bhairava's shoulder-thread,
companion to the playful Boar,[137]
the weapon of the Sun's son,[138]
Garuḍa's daily meal,[139]
the sword hidden in the fragrance of the *ketakī* flower,[140]
the rope that ties the churning rod that was the mountain[141]—

the great snakes who are all this
will lead us to success.

With a single thin line of musk, drawn by his fingernail,
    on his forehead,
and a striking dot in the middle,
three streaks of sandal and kunkuma marking his chest,
milky white tassles covering his left ear,
a soiled turban tightly twisted into his long hair,
a big snake draped across his shoulders,
his anklet jingling and jangling,

the master of poisons and ophidian arts,
    the long-winded Snake Charmer,
    has arrived.

[134] Mother of the serpents.

[135] Probably Rāhu.

[136] As the Kuṇḍalinī coiled around the *mūlâdhārā-cakra*, according to Yogic physiology.

[137] *krīḍā-varāhamu*—the Boar-form playfully assumed by Viṣṇu.

[138] Karṇa's *nāgâstra*.

[139] The Garuḍa eagle preys upon snakes.

[140] Snakes hide in the *ketakī* bush and bite whoever comes to pick the flowers.

[141] At the time of the churning of the ocean, the serpent Vāsuki served as the rope tied to Mount Mandara.

He puffs up his cheeks, like two dark *musidi* fruits.[142]
An instrument made of conch and shells, held under his arms,
could outdo the *nādasvaram* whine.
Fingers of both hands open and close the seven holes.
When the *ālāpa* moves into rhythmic beats, you can hear a squeak.
The Snake Charmer plays a flourish of *rāgas*—Nāgasindhu,
Varāṭa, in their varieties—
on the *nagasoram*, to make the snake dance.

[*Stage-Manager:*]

They move on toward a pavilion, directly in front of them, where a crowd of fun-lovers and soldiers is gathered. Hearing the noise, Ṭiṭṭibha asks Govinda Śarma, who says:

Sleek black hair spilling over the forehead, above the eyes,
tied in a topknot, is coming loose.
The dot made of *kalivĕ* paste has dried up and is running in curves.
Hanging from the shoulder, under his arm-pit, is the round *gumeta*
drum to make music for the dance.
On his wrist, a thin hand-guard with jingling bells.
He furrows his forehead, yawns, rolls his eyes,
sings a *rāga* and, pleased with his singing, starts to dance.
He's the pole-dancer[143] from the east.

As they go on, Mañcana Śarma says: 'Look, my friend. Two fierce rams, bathed in water,[144] raised in fields they have fertilized with their urine,[145] follow their masters as little calves follow cows. Bells ring on their necks, and peepal leaves rustle on the iron tips of their curved horns.[146] They're ready for battle. Let's watch this dice game played with living dice.' Two parties call out their bets.

[142] *Musidi* is.dark and poisonous.
[143] *gaḍiḍu* < *gaḍa*, a bamboo pole.
[144] syntax unintelligble here.
[145] *pañcitambu*.
[146] Small, sharp iron tips are attached to the ram's horns, which are decorated with *aśvattha* leaves.

Each huge ram is certain in its heart
of victory, and totally unafraid.
Facing each other, they first step back a few paces,
then smash into each other.
These rams are no small things

Their foreheads split open. Blood pours out.
They go at it again, like great warriors,
equally matched.

Like iron balls crashing into each other,
or a pile of bamboo stalks hurled on the ground,
the two rams batter one another, hitting again and again
to the point of exhaustion.

Breathing slowly, staggering in weakness, they fall unconscious.

'Great ram! Your thick hair, so soft and luxurious,
is a carpet fit for kings.
Splendid vehicle for the god of fire, lord of the east,
when he goes out for a ride:[147]
Your great testicles, hanging low, excite the jackal
who follows you everywhere, hoping they'll fall.
You who supplied a head to Dakṣa, when Vīrabhadra cut off the
one he had:
Alas, O ram of rams, O silenced king of goats and lovers!

May you now be free from all obstructions.' And they walk on, and come upon a crowd betting on the cockfight, with cocks hanging under their arms. 'Another game of dice played with live dice! We should favor this contest. On each of these heroic cocks—brothers to the stone cock of Pānugaḷḷu—

is a thick copper-red tuft, like the *pārijāta* flower,
as if a fiery anger inside
had made a hole in the middle of the head
and shot up in a flame.

[147] Agni's vehicle is the ram.

They seem to be of the species of Coconut Cranes—these fierce roosters that stretch their necks, flap their wings, scratch the ground with their feet as they cry, 'Ko Ko Ko'. Proud; with bright eyes, like stars, red at the corners. Strutting, glaring at one another, pouncing angrily, flying up, tearing into each other's chest with the knives tied to their feet, pushing and poking, tasting the sharp taste of blood that flows from their wounds into their mouths, gurgling from their throats in fury, extending their wings left and right to hit one another while parrying the opponent's blows, then surreptitiously crawling under the other's feet to lacerate his cheeks with their steely beaks, holding the enemy's head down to the ground so he cannot move, tearing open each other's belly with the crooked knives on their toes: they fight like Vālin and Sugrīva, like Vinda and Anuvinda, like Kṛṣṇa and Cāṇūra in sole combat. Cāraṇas, Gandharvas, Vidyādharas, Garuḍas, all praise their valor. They are committed to battle until at last they fall, each by himself, in the arena, soaked in blood, losing consciousness.

Alas! Second vehicle for the god Kumāra! Lord of mantras!
You who possess the great wisdom of ripening time.
You feast on food offered to the spirits. You made it possible for
Indra
to fuck Ahalyā. Blind with passion yourself, you force yourself on
your mate.
Full of unbridled ego—bugles announcing the triumph of desire—
killed in battle, you roosters are on your way to heaven.
Will you also make love to Rambhā, Tilotttamā, and Menakā,
the gods' own women, you little chickens?'

[*Stage-Manager*:]

Turning south, they see the golden domes over the entrance to the palace of Madhumāvati, daughter of Mādhavasarma.

'It's a lie to say
that there are no beauties of the Lotus Type
except in the Simhala Island.We have one—
Śiva's girl, Madhumāvati—right here in Orugallu.

She smells like sandal, and when she breathes,
it's waterlilies everywhere. Her breasts
put the *cakravāka* birds to shame. Her eyes
are lightning streaks in the first rain,
darting like fish.

Listen, Ṭiṭṭibha Sĕṭṭi! A certain handsome Yogi
paid her fee one night and did it with her
according to the Bhairava Tantra. Satisfied,
he inscribed with his fingernails, on the wall of her house,
in Telugu verse, the story of her birth, her name,
her future, and her fortunes, for everyone to read.

Look: you can read it yourself—her past, present, and future births, and her type.

'First she was a Gandharva girl, Kamala-pāṇi, born to Aṅgāra-parṇa
in Alakā.
This Madhumāvati, in Orugallu, embodies her on earth.
She'll be reborn in Dakṣârāma with the name Cinnipoti.
She'll be in the class of gods' women:
she'll make love to Śiva for a long time
and then be born as Kattulayammi,
in a Cĕñcu family also known as Govila from the wilderness
in the Vengi Kuruvāṭikā land, on the shores of the Tamileru,[148]
with flashing eyes, swifter than fish,
and breasts bigger than the domes of the Sultan's capital, Dhārā.'[149]

This Madhumāvati has a sister called Madâlasa. She is the kept woman of Śrīdhara, the son of your uncle, Mīsālappayya Dvivedi. We hear that he's hooked on her, and that this handsome fellow is right here. Let's go see.'

They enter the main door, pass through several courtyards. On a rug in front of a glass room, the two sisters, and the cousin, are seated, with sour faces, together but not together. Govinda smiles at them and [text lost].

[148] in the Delta near modern Elūru.

[149] These verses are in the *kāla-jñāna* style of retrospective prophecy: hence the future verbs may, in fact, reflect past events.

'You mortgaged your interest in Jŏnnagaḍḍa,
the village given to your Brahmin ancestors as a gift,
for five hundred rupees a year. So enjoy yourselves
while it lasts—you and Madâlasa.
Life is short.

Why are the three of you so quiet?
It's like offering betel to a fly.
Is something wrong?
You don't seem to be terribly angry.'

Madhumāvati replies to Govinda Mañcana Sarma:

'What can I say? You're like my brother. Still,[150] I have to tell you.
This brother-in-law of yours is good for nothing.
Last night, while I happened to be sleeping
in my sister Madâlasa's bedroom
in a down bed, alone, he untied my sari
and did whatever he did. I was drunk at the time,
but he bragged about it. My sister and I
had a fight. He's no Brahmin. He's a con.

It was midnight, I was completely drunk,
with no sense of my body. He messed with me
in the bedroom. He's a bastard: lives in a tent
and cuts the ropes.

You know what's fair and what's foul. It's our good luck
that you came. What can we do to atone
for our unconscious sins?

I didn't do anything wrong except for lying in bed,
dead drunk, alone. Why am I saddled with sin?
To rid myself of this, to make me pure, I am prepared
to touch the feet of the great god of love.'

Govinda says: 'You don't seem to know the subtleties of lovers' dharma. What happened was nothing wrong. When dealing with whores, there is

[150] A brother is an unlikely audience for intimate secrets.

no reason to observe the kinship rules. Didn't Indra's kept woman, Urvaśī, lust for Arjuna, his son? Did Rāvaṇa hold himself back from Rambhā, who should have been his daughter-in-law, since she was Nalakūbara's woman?[151] There's no rule that a lover should stay away from a whore just because she's his mother, maidservant, sister, daughter, or nanny.

> If she's skilled at love, tasteful, intelligent, with a pretty face,
> and above all available, no rules pertain to a whore.'

That's how he puts their minds at ease.

> 'Sister-in-law, whore, and lover: please stop quarrelling among
> yourselves.
> Let pleasure increase day by day. We have to go.'
> And Mañcana Śarma leaves, amazed at the riches in that great house:

> 'Sons and daughters, plenty to eat and drink,
> lots of cash, gold, and silver all over the house,
> and relatives multiplying like lotuses in the field:
> they got it all for the price of one *ummĕta* flower
> on Śiva's head.'[152]

They leave Madhumāvati's house. The learned Brahmin, ready for the next encounter, sees the sun descending into the west. 'Look, Ṭiṭṭibha! It's like the mirror where Varuṇa's whore sees herself. No need to delay any more. Red-lipped women, drunk on coconut liquor from betel-leaf cups, are dancing the Puṣpagandhika Dance in the lanes of the park. In the courtyard, they compose verses in many *rāgas* to demonstrate their expressive skills. Deeper in the park, they enact various styles of dance (*abhinaya*)[153]—so that the moods and emotions emerge with sweetness. But if we take time to watch all of this, the auspicious moment set by the

[151] In Telugu kinship, a man' s brother's son is classed as a son, and this son's wife is thus a daughter-in-law.

[152] The manuscript inserts an apostrophe to Ṭiṭṭibha here. We follow the original (*v*)*iḍināru ṭiṭṭibhā*, with past verb (printed editions: *viḍuvāru veḍukan*).

[153] *pracchedana, saindhava, dvimūḍhaka, sthita, paryabhimārga*: these *abhinaya*-types are unknown.

astrologer for entering Kāma-mañjari's house will pass. We're in the fourth quarter of the star Puṣya. This moment is untouched by the eddies of time or by poisonous pulse. It's doubly delicious—the perfectly propitious time to benefit from imbibing the nectar of a woman's lips. We have to get past the beauties of the street, and fast. But notice this woman playing ball, a little heavily,[154] with her companions in the shade of the *surapŏnna* tree. We should at least give her a passing glance.

> Necklaces falling over their full, young breasts,
> bracelets, anklets, belts chiming together—
> desire plays up and down
> with these girls, juggling three golden balls
> with both their hands.

[*Stage-Manager*:]

They go a few steps, and right before them they see the daughter-in-law of an actor, peeping over a wall. She was an old 'acquaintance' of Mañcana Śarma, as he informs Ṭiṭṭibha:

> 'She' s just given birth.
> The more I look at her, the more I see
> her breasts have come down from the heights.
> It's hardly surprising.
> Young *cakravāka* birds do come down
> from the sky.'[155]

A few steps further along, he points out a farmer to Ṭiṭṭibha:

> 'When the cold month of Māgha pounced like a tiger,
> this farmer sold his blanket for cash.
> His wife's breasts are warmer than any brazier,
> and smokeless too. Why should he worry
> about winter?[156]

[154] Is she pregnant? *krīḍā-bharamuna*.

[155] Punning: *vrālu*—to perch, to fall.

[156] Modelled on *Sattasaī*: *vikrīṇīte māgha-māse*—see introduction of Bandaru Tammayya, 22. Śrīnātha is said to have translated *Sattasaī*, but the work is no longer extant. This verse is believed to be from this translation.

Breasts full as the temples of the elephants that hold up the world.
Eyes brighter than the fish on the Love-God's banner.
Thighs gleaming like lightning—
are there other women with all this,
apart from the whores of Orugallu?'

Leaving the district of bordellos, they come to the entrance of the Bhairava temple, where a group of whores and their customers have gathered to discuss complaints and grievances. 'What is being disputed in this court?' asks Mañcana Śarma.

'First the Madam paraded her daughter as a decoy,
and took cash from this foreigner for a night's services.
Then she discretely sent for her favorite customer
and sneaked the girl into his bed.
She dolled up her maid and sent her to the Brahmin
in the dark of the night.
In the morning, he looked at her and made a fuss,
but the Madam was unperturbed. So that Tamil man[157]
rushed out in anger and complained to the police.
They have summoned the loud-mouthed old lady.
She's not just a Madam: she's a real bitch.'

The old lady, scared, bows low to the assembly and addresses the Tamil Brahmin:

'What do you think we promised you, Stranger?[158]
Even if the Kākatīya king himself asked for this girl,
she wouldn't come. What can I do?
To tell you the truth, she won't reveal her breasts
and give a hug
even to a young mango tree.[159]

[157] *piḷḷa*—apparently a generic name for all Tamils, including this one who is a Brahmin.

[158] literally: Brahmin of the Tundira [= Tondai] country (*tuṇḍīra-dvija-śreṣṭha*) in northern Tamil Nadu.

[159] The poet has invented a new item in the list of *dohadas*, that is, the stimulations offered by young girls to late-blooming trees: the *priyaṅgu* blossoms at the touch of

Why make a public scandal? It isn't fair.'
The lovers gathered there decide to teach the old lady
a lesson, for once. They turn to Mañcana Śarma:
'You're the expert in customer law. You should speak.'

[*Mañcana Śarma*:]

'This isn't worth six months of arguments
by the lawyers of love.
Just shave off her hair, right now.
Don't hesitate.

Chopping off the nose to the root;
knocking out all the teeth;
cutting off the ears down to the drum—
these are the punishments prescribed
for a Madam who lies.

That's how the law looks to me. Punish these lowly creatures in accordance with their crimes. And I have another request.

The girls in this town
are versed in the sacred scriptures of love,
experts in all its rituals,
adept at the sacrifice of copulation:
please give me leave to go.
I have to study the great third goal of man[160]
where young whores reside.'

Now the sun, a jeweled mirror for the women of Varuṇa's harem, slips behind the Sunset Mountain. The twilight sky changes from saffron to dark blue. Like jasmine buds in the tangled hair of Śiva, tossed wildly as he dances, stars sparkle in the sky. Like *cāmpeya* flowers in the ears of the dark woman, Night, the earth glimmers, a promise of continuous

---

a girl, the *bakula* after being sprayed with liquor from her mouth, the *aśoka* by being kicked, the *tilaka* by being looked at, the *kuravaka* by being embraced, the *mandāra* from pleasant words, the *campaka* by being smiled at, the *nameru* from song, the mango by being breathed upon, the *karṇikāra* through a girl's dance.

[160] *kāma*, desire [missing text supplied by the editor, Manavalli Ramakrishnakavi].

beauty. Dusk and gathering darkness shimmer like red-and-black *kuruvinda* beads, strung in garlands on the towers of space. Govinda Śarma, at this auspicious moment, when the cows come home, enters the high-class neighborhood. He is looking at all the places where he had once met and made love with Kāma-mañjari, in secret—the main chariot-street, the square in front of the Śiva temple, and the water pavilions. By his eye-movements, he informs the various professional go-betweens—mendicant women, shaven heads, and those with a little tuft of hair—of his presence. He takes up residence in the house of a Śaiva temple priestess: a private place, set apart, well-known to him from before, with no men around; a place that was itself like a new bride, with heavy breasts, ready for the wedding but separated from her husband. A place to rest. He sends the priestess, a widow, to carry word of his arrival, as if on pilgrimage. Near a well behind the Vīrabhadreśvara temple, he performs his evening prayers. He is meditating:

'No other god
could hit Death on his head
with the leg of a cot[161] and defeat him.
No other god
could knock out the Sun's teeth,
or burn Love with the fire in his eye.
Could I ever fold my hands in prayer
to any god but Śiva?'[162]

Finishing his worship, he sits in comfort and says to Ṭiṭṭibha:

[*text missing: 'The light that is put out by the fragrant breath from the mouth of a lotus-faced girl . . . ' (276). Verse 277 is also damaged: 'I get her used to coming to me in the dead of night, when everyone is deep in sleep. With half-closed eyes. . . .'*]

'Black sari tightly wound around her legs, twisted in layers
around her waist, with a sharp spear in her hand,
a full red shirt covering her breasts, suddenly,

[161] The *khaṭvāṅga*.

[162] This is perhaps the only true prayer, and serious verse, in the entire text.

in the middle of the night, she shows up
like a warrior, shouting a salute.'[163]

[*Stage-Manager*:]

This lover goes on and on, reminiscing with delight in the company of his friend Ṭiṭṭibha. His mind is turbulent with desire to see Kāma-mañjari. He is waiting for the arrival of his 'soul-mate'; he hears every blade of grass, every ant that moves. As the moment of her appearance approaches. . .[164] The moon emerges out of the dark cavern of the eastern sky, like a lion leaping into the sky, tearing through the darkness, spilling stars as a lion would claw an elephant and scatter the pearls on its forehead. This is the moment she arrives, in an excess of joy at the appearance of her beloved 'husband' in the midst of all that moonlight.

She is pretending to be there in order to worship Vīrabhadra [*in his shrine . . . text lost*].

Holding a golden plate loaded with yellow rice and sandalpaste, for
worship,

and betel leaves folded with cool camphor,
Kāma-mañjari arrives, full of joy,
wearing a newly-washed saree and a golden blouse of silk,
as if going to the temple to worship Śiva, but in truth
intent on the pleasure of stolen love.

Like the goddess who is moonlight, she steals up on him
shyly and bows lovingly at his feet.

He feels friendship, joy, affection, playfulness
as he lifts her up and presses her against him,
so that the skin around her breasts tingles and
bristles, like a bed of rice-seedlings
about to be transplanted.

[163] *johāru*—a salute.

[164] Reading *dharma-sati* for *dharma-pati* in the printed text. The text is corrupt and largely unintelligible at this point; several lines are missing.

He sits down and says,
'My love, it's strange, you know,
but in the absence of your beauty
and your beguiling voice,
the cries of parrots and cuckoos,
even the music of the lute,
sound to me like donkeys braying,
burning my ears.'

The illicit lovers go outside, into the moonlight. Standing in front of the pūjāri's house, they try to think of a way to fix up Ṭiṭṭibha with the young daughter of that priestly family.[165] She is like a fresh-water pearl. Gently they call out to the woman of the house, the girl's mother. They put some gold coins, with betel and camphor, into her hand and look her over from toe to tip, nodding in approval.

First, a huge investment: lavishing great beauty,
exhausting his treasury of gold.
Then, having spent all these riches,
there was still much hard work.
And after this great effort, she still eludes all her lovers.
And in that case, couldn't he have given her a husband?
With all this—cost, trouble, pain, and frustration—
you wonder what God was aiming at
when he created this woman.

'The year before last,' they say,[166] 'her tiny breasts
were just beginning to stand up under her dress.
Last year, they were as beautiful as the budding lotus.
This year they look like pots made of gold.
Next year they'll be fit for a full embrace.'
They wink at the mother and say,
'Charge one gold coin for tonight, and bring her
to Ṭiṭṭibha's bed.
A little extra cash[167] won't hurt.

[165] *tammaḍi/tammaḷi*, a Śaiva priest (equivalent to *nambi* for the Vaiṣṇavas).
[166] The two lovers are speaking to each other.
[167] *sahāya-śrī*. Commentators are silent on this pregnant phrase.

As a deflowering fee, we'll give you two more coins.
We'll keep it quiet: your relatives need not know.
We're good at that. Don't worry.'[168]

That's how they give her, curls falling over her forehead, to Tiṭṭibha. Then, as Tiṭṭibha listens, they look at the moon, intently, and say:

'You are the beloved son of the Ocean of Milk: give us goodness.
You are the uncle of Desire: give us total happiness.
You are the loving husband of the moonlit night: give us delight.
You are the brother of the goddess of wealth: give us riches.'

This whoring couple offers fragrant water and sprinkles camphor in the moon's direction, as they bow with a depth of feeling.

The actors came from Dorasamudram.
The lovers belong to Orugallu.
The poet is from the grand
city of Vinukŏṇḍa. God brought all three
together, to delight people of taste.

Kālabhairava, who dwells in the cave on the beautiful hill of Mulkināḍu,
born as Śiva's son, will bestow blessings of prosperity
on Vallabharāya, son of Tippaya, who fulfills all poets' wishes.

Exeunt omni. The street-play in one chapter called The Joys of Sex, composed by the famous lord Vinukŏṇḍa Vallabharāya, the servant of all good poets, the good son of Tippaya the Minister and Candamâmba, ends here.

[168] Note the attention to a discrete alliance with the courtesan. The suggestion is that the mother can charge another deflowering fee later, from another customer.

AFTERWORD

A Dense Epitome of the World: The Image of Warangal in the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*[1]

PHILLIP B. WAGONER

If one pauses to reflect upon the setting of Vinukŏṇḍa Vallabharāya's *Krīḍâbhirāmamu,* a number of intriguing questions arise. One set revolves around the relationship between the Warangal of our text and the actual Warangal of history—or, to put it differently, between the literary and the archaeological images of the city. How 'accurate' is the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*'s image of Warangal? To what extent does it depend upon conventional, stereotyped modes of literary description, and to what extent does it depart from such conventions? Might the image be based, to some degree, on direct, first-hand knowledge of the city? Is Vallabharāya's concern for spatial relationships great enough to permit us to chart his characters' movements, to plot them on a map of the city?

A second set of questions has to do with the significance of Warangal for the poet. Why should Vallabharāya, who was writing from Mopūru in Mulikināḍu (in the present Cuddapah District of Andhra Pradesh), choose the city of Warangal, some 400 kilometers away in the northern

[1] This essay is based on research carried out with the support of a U.S.D.E. Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Fellowship in 1999–2000. All black and white photographs are by John Henry Rice.

part of Telangana, as the setting for his play? Why Warangal of all possible cities, and not some more obvious candidate, such as Vijayanagara, the capital of the empire that his family had served for some generations? If not Vijayanagara itself, why not some other city within the Vijayanagara empire, instead of Warangal, which then lay deep within the territory of another state, the Bahmani Sultanate centered in Gulbarga?

Had Warangal served merely as a backdrop for the play's action, these questions might remain mere curiosities, but since the city itself is a primary focus of the play's representation—in effect emerging as one of the main 'characters' within the work—these are in fact fundamental questions that must be answered if we are to comprehend the text's larger cultural significance. In this afterword, we shall consider these questions—both those concerning the relationship between literary and archaeological images of the city, and those relating to Vallabharāya's particular choice of Warangal rather than some other city. But first we must ground ourselves by briefly considering the history and form of the actual city.

Warangal: The Form of the Kākatīya City

The city of Warangal was laid out by the Kākatīyas during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and served as their capital from its foundation until 1323, when the city fell to the army of the Delhi Sultanate.[2] Warangal was not, however, the original capital of the Kākatīya kingdom. When the dynasty first appeared on the historical scene during the first half of the eleventh century, the Kākatīyas were ruling from the city of Hanumakonda, an earlier fort and ritual center that is presently embraced within the northwestern sector of Warangal's outer earthen rampart. Although it provided excellent defensive potential, thanks to the three hills that protected it on the north, west, and east, it was limited in

[2] For the history of the Kākatīyas, see P.V. Parabrahma Sastry, *The Kākatīyas* (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1978); for an illustrated description and analysis of Warangal's city plan, see George Michell, 'City as Cosmogram: The Circular Plan of Warangal,' with appendix by Phillip B. Wagoner, *South Asian Studies* 8 (1992): 1–18.

size and could not keep up with the needs of its rulers once they began to entertain imperial aspirations after the successful military campaigns of Rudradeva (r.1158–95). By 1163, when Rudradeva established his so-called Thousand Pillared Temple at Hanumakonda to commemorate his conquests and proclaim his status as an independent sovereign (his predecessors had remained content with their status as feudatories of the Chalukyas of Kalyani), the monument had to be erected outside the fort's walls in order to be in the center of the city's residential area, which by this time had spilled out into the open lands to the north. Clearly, by the last quarter of the twelfth century, it was necessary to redesign the capital in some way in order to protect its burgeoning population.

The obvious solution would have been simply to expand the older capital by adding a new line of defensive fortifications around the Hanumakonda fort so as to encompass its outlying suburbs. It is striking, however, that this option was not taken, and instead a completely new city was laid out on what appears to have been virgin ground a short distance to the southeast of the old capital. The center of this new city lies at a point located 6.5 kilometers southeast of the center of the Hanumakonda fort, in the middle of an open plain curiously devoid of any natural defensive potential, and essentially flat apart from the presence of a single large stone hillock that rises up at a point half a kilometer east-southeast from the city's geographic center. It is this 'single stone' (Telugu *ŏru* 'one' + *kallu* 'stone'; Sanskrit *eka* 'one' + *śilā* 'stone' + *nagara* 'city')[3] that is understood to have given the new city its name, Orugallu or Ekaśilānagara.

[3] Although popular, this etymology is dubious, since the use of *ŏru* ('one' in Tamil) is not attested independently in Telugu. A more plausible etymology would derive the name from the word *orugallu* or *oragallu* (from *ŏrayu* 'to rub' + *kallu* 'stone'), used in the sense of a 'touchstone' for testing the purity of gold. Interpreted in this way, the Telugu name of the city might reflect the early popularity of the legend of the city's founding on the site of a 'philosopher's stone *liṅga*' (*parusavedi-liṅgambu*) which had the power of transmuting base metals to gold, as recorded in the mid-sixteenth century text *Pratāparudra-caritramu*. See C.V. Ramachandra Rao, ed. *Ekâmranāthuni Pratāparudracaritramu* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, 1984), pp. 23–4.

Although this new site may not have enjoyed the natural defensive potential of the old fort at Hanumakonda, it did lend itself perfectly to the laying out of an idealized, circular plan, with a concentric and radial geometry that would better express the imperial position of the later Kākatīyas. Upon this smooth and regular plain, the city was built in a circular form defined by three concentric lines of fortifications: an inner stone wall preceded by a moat, a little over 1 km in diameter; beyond this a second earthen wall and moat, about 2.5 kms in diameter; and then finally, a third rampart of earth measuring approximately 13 kilometers across, and physically linking the new city to Hanumakonda by embracing the earlier fort within its circuit. Four gateways were provided in each of these walls, one at each of the four cardinal directions, and axial roads led inward from each gate to intersect at the city center. In the middle of the new city, just east of the geometric center represented by the intersection of its main avenues running north-south and east-west, lay the vast temple complex of Svayambhū-Śiva, who is identified in contemporary texts as the Kākatīyas' family-deity and protector of the welfare of their kingdom.[4] Apart from its four ceremonial gateways (*kīrti-toraṇa*) which still mark the boundaries of the site at the four cardinal directions, little else of this temple is left standing. Even so, it is possible to deduce, from the outlines of the foundations, the positions of the *kīrti-toraṇas*, and the overall nature of the fragmentary structural remains that cover the site, that the temple's form would have been that of a centrally planned *sarvatobhadra* shrine, in which the deity's square shrine possesses doorways opening out to the four cardinal directions. The main image of Svayambhū-Śiva—preserved today under a tree within the courtyard of a nearby temple[5]—was a 'Four-faced Liṅga', that is, a *liṅga* carved with

[4] See, for example, Vidyānātha's *Pratāparudra-yaśobhūṣaṇa*, chapter 3, the embedded play 'Pratāparudra-Kalyāṇa' I, 5 and *passim*. For a translation of this work, see Pierre Filliozat, *Le Pratāparudrīya de Vidyānātha, avec le commentaire Ratnāpaṇa de Kumārasvāmin* (Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1963).

[5] There is a finely carved *caturmukhaliṅga* which has been removed from its original place of foundation and is presently lying with other pieces of sculpture in the Śambhuni-guḍi, just southwest of the ruined temple. In all likelihood, this was the original primary cult icon worshipped in the Svayambhū-Śiva temple, and was moved here in the early sixteenth century by Shitab Khan, an Islamicized Hindu ruler who

one face of Śiva on each side so as to gaze out from the shrine through the doorways and *toraṇas* to the four quarters of the kingdom.[6] The form of this temple complex thus reiterated, albeit on a smaller scale and in a square as opposed to a circular format, the larger concentric and axial form of the city as a whole. Just to the west of the city center, the temple was most likely balanced by the Kākatīya palace complex, which may very well have stood on the site presently occupied by the Khush Mahal—the Tughluq audience hall erected here immediately after the occupation of the city by the Delhi Sultanate in 1323.[7]

One further prominent feature is the stark granite outcropping mentioned above, which rises up from the otherwise flat terrain in the south-eastern quadrant of the inner city. This outcropping, known today as Ekaśilā hill, holds three structures at its peak: a modest temple, a small vaulted chamber, and an octagonal cannon emplacement, the latter two datable to the period of the city's occupation by the Quṭb Shāhis (1579–1687). A number of footings, sockets, and stairways carved into the sheetrock here suggest the likelihood that this zone of the city would have

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was then ruling Warangal, and whose inscription in the forehall of the Śambhuni-guḍi refers to his having 'acquired immense wealth by worshipping, daily, at Ekaśilāpura, the god Svayambhū-Śiva, who was the wish-fullfilling gem for the protection of the Kākati family' (IAP Warangal 111, v.36; dated 1509).Although the two preceeding verses in Shitab Khan's inscription record his reinstallation of two other Kākatīya-period deities that had been uprooted from their temples by the Turushkas, the present verse conspicuously fails to mention the performance of such a re-establishment in the case of Svayambhū-Śiva. The Svayambhū-Śiva temple was apparently too badly damaged after its desecration to permit the image to be reinstalled in its original location, and accordingly, Shitab Khan must have instead moved it to its present location (and significantly, the location of his inscription) in the Śambhuni-guḍi.

[6] This interpretation is based on detailed survey and analysis of the Svayambhū-Śiva temple's structural remains carried out by the author on-site in 1999–2000. Full details of the case for the temple's *sarvatobhadra* plan will be presented in an article currently under preparation.

[7] For particulars on the Khush Mahal, as well as on other Tughluq structures discovered in Warangal during the author's 1999–2000 season, see Phillip B. Wagoner and John Henry Rice, 'From Delhi to the Deccan: Newly Discovered Tughluq Monuments at Warangal-Sultanpur and the Beginnings of Indo-Islamic Architecture in Southern India' *Artibus Asiae* 61/1 (2001: 77–117).

been heavily built up even during the Kākatīya period. To the south and west of this hill is a large tank or water reservoir (*cĕruvu*), which is the only standing body of water within the city's innermost zones.

Apart from the city's overall structure, defined in terms of its central node, its multiple rings of fortifications, and the tentative indications of its main axial roads, little else of the city's premodern fabric is discernable today. Elsewhere, scattered around the site, there are a handful of surface remains in varying states of preservation. These include small stone temples dating to both the Kākatīya and post-Kākatīya periods of the city, and a number of service structures of uncertain function, including what appear to be granaries (in the southwestern sector) and possibly stables (in the northeast sector). There are also a number of locations, most notably in the area around the boundary between the southwestern and southeastern quadrants, where fragmentary stone architectural members protrude from the tops of high mounds of accumulated soil, indicating the presence of significant architectural features just below the surface. Clearly, systematic excavation of key areas within the city would reveal much more detailed information about the form and character of the premodern city, but thus far, it has not been possible to realize this goal.

Convention and Innovation in Vallabharāya's Image of Warangal

Let us turn now to the image of Orugallu that emerges from the *Krīḍâbhirāmamu*. We may begin by considering the degree to which Vallabharāya relies upon established descriptive conventions in constructing his image of Warangal. As A.K. Ramanujan demonstrated in his classic essay 'Towards an Anthology of Indian City Images,'[8] poets in classical Sanskrit and vernacular literary traditions employed a rich store of poetic conventions to build up the images of cities that occur in their

[8] See A.K. Ramanujan, 'Toward an Anthology of Indian City Images,' in *Urban India: Society, Space, and Image*, ed. Richard G. Fox, Durham: Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, 1970, pp. 224–44.

works. These images, based on poetic conceits and *alaṃkāra* ornaments comparing particular urban features with elements of the natural world, often reveal more about underlying South Asian attitudes toward cities than they do about the urban form or architectural qualities of the particular city being described. Indeed, a random comparison of city descriptions occuring in Telugu poetic works up to Vallabharāya's time reveals little to differentiate real, historical cities from either the idealized cities of myth or the imagined cities of poetic fiction. This observation holds true whether the description is of a contemporary ruler's capital as recorded in a panegyric inscription, of the mythic Ayodhyā of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic as retold in the *Bhāskara* or *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇas*, or of a purely imagined city, such as Ratnapura, the 'Jewel City' of Śrīnātha's *Śivarātri Māhātmyamu*.

Upon first consideration, it appears that Vallabharāya's description of Orugallu falls squarely within this poetic tradition, in that he employs many of the same poetic figures and conceits in building up his image. Compare, for example, Vallabharāya's characterization of the city wall in his verse (112) describing one of the gateways leading into the inner city, with a verse from Śrīnātha's *Śivarātri Māhātmyamu*, describing the wall of the imaginary city of Ratnapura.

They see the rocky moat, a highway
from the deepest Nether World to heaven.
They reach the great wall reaching up to the stars,
whose end you cannot see.

(*Krīḍâbhirāmamu* 112)

Made from stones of crystal and ruby,
the walls of that city reach up to touch the sky
as if the gem-studded serpent Vāsuki
had slithered up from the netherworld to encircle the town.

(*Śivarātri Māhātmyamu*, II, 4 [my translation])

Reading the two verses, one is struck by the close similarity in idea and expression between the two descriptions, both of which not only employ the figure of hyperbole (*atiśayokti*) to suggest the tremendous height of

the city walls 'reaching up to the stars' or 'reaching up to touch the sky,' but even more intriguingly, further accentuate the walls' height by juxtaposing this figure with another one suggesting the rootedness of the city down to the level of the netherworld . Śrīnātha calls upon the image of the cosmic serpent Vāsuki who carries the world on his hoods; Vallabharāya speaks of a 'highway from the deepest Nether World to heaven.' The point is that in his general descriptive strategy, as well as in much of the specific content of his description, Vallabharāya is hardly being guided by a concern for realism; rather, he is faithfully following the poetic conventions that had been established in the Telugu poetry of his day.

If Vallabharāya's image of Warangal is highly conventional in this respect, there are yet other ways in which his construction of the cityscape differs decisively from established practice. For one thing, his emphasis on the characters' experience of movement through urban space imparts to his image of Warangal an apparent particularity and spatial coherence that is most often lacking in traditional poetic representations of cities. While Śrīnātha's description of Ratnapura—to continue with that example—jumps from vignette to vignette so as to construct the literary equivalent of a cubistic representation of the city, emphasizing the autonomous beauty of individual vistas with little regard for how they relate to one another spatially, the image of Warangal is built up through a carefully ordered series of vistas, as they would be experienced in proper spatial-temporal sequence by a subject entering and moving through the city. Thus Śrīnātha, in his luxurious image of Ratnapura, jumps disconnectedly from the city's larger geographic setting (II, 3) to its enclosing walls (II, 4), to the temples within the city (II, 5), to the nearby pilgrimage center of Omkāreśvara (II, 6), and then to the agricultural villages in the city's immediate hinterland (II, 7), the stepwells outside the town (II, 8), the moat surrounding the town (II, 9), and then back inside to the city's elephants (II, 10), before returning outside the walls to the surrounding ponds (II, 11). If there is any logic at all connecting these verses, it is not spatial but aesthetic, determined by a concern for juxtaposing contrasting images and verse forms to create a richly variegated visual and aural effect.

In contrast, Vallabharāya's image of Warangal is constructed through the sequential movement of his two heroes through the city's zones and neighborhoods. The action begins with Mañcana Śarma and Ṭiṭṭibha Sĕṭṭi approaching Warangal, apparently from the east, and entering the 'outer town' *vĕli-pāḷĕmbu* (vv.67, 81; later called *bāhya-kaṭaka*, v.111), which appears to correspond to the area within the city's inner mud-wall. They follow a main road flanked with covered colonnades (*vīthī-viṭaṅkamu*, v.85, 111), passing through a series of various quarters in the outer town—including those of the basket weavers (*kaṭa-kāra kuṭīra vāṭika*, v.67), the farmers (*vĕli-pāḷĕmbu madhya-pradeśambuna hālika-vāṭi*, v.81), and the gardeners (*dohari-vāḍa*, v.105; v.1. *mohari-vāḍa*, 'army quarters', following Singaracarya)—before arriving at the great gateway (*pĕdda gavani*, v.112) leading into Warangal proper. Once through the gateway, they leave the 'Royal Avenue' (*rāja-mārgambu*, v.114)—a clear reference to one of the four radial streets connecting the cardinal gateways to the city center—and turn instead to follow a smaller street running at the foot of the embankment of the inner stone wall (*āluvari-krindi trova*, v.115). After continuing further in some unspecified direction, they draw near enough to the center of the city (*paṭṭaṇamu madhya-kṣoṇi*, v.146) to witness the planting of a lion standard there, and to see in the distance a number of temples, shrines, and other sacred edifices, including the temple of the Kākatīya patron deity Svayambhū-Śiva, and a 'mosque of the Turks, where Allah dwells' (*kartāruḍ' uṇḍu turkala masīdu*, v.149). The rest of Vallabharāya's sketch unfolds in similar fashion, although the spatial relationships become progressively more vague and contradictory as the two heroes move westward from the city center, through the quarters of the courtesans and cooking women on their way to the high-class neighborhood (*ārya-vāṭika*) where Kāma-mañjari lives.

Vallabharāya's spatially oriented mode of description may be best appreciated, however, at the detailed level of the single verse. A particularly striking example of this descriptive mode occurs in the verse considered above (v.112), which describes the gateway in the inner wall through which the hero and his companion enter into Warangal proper from the outer town. This time, let us consider the entire verse:

They see the rocky moat, a highway
    from the deepest Nether World to heaven.
They reach the great earthen wall reaching up to the stars,
    whose end you cannot see.
They enter into the inner gateway with its sharp turns,
    humming with people, a dense epitome of the world.
Slowly they pass through the main gateway with its immense golden
        doors,
    like the Golden Mountain with two shimmering wings.
It is all they can do to avoid the traffic—
    chariots, horses, carts, and elephants—
    on their way into Orugallu.

Through this single compact verse, Vallabharāya conjures up a vivid semblance of the sequence of visual images that would be generated in passing through one of the four actual gateways leading into the inner city. Everything here is carefully depicted in lucid detail: the 'great moat' (*ganapa parikha*) surrounding the city's innermost ring of fortifications; the circuit of the wall itself (*prākāra-rekha*), towering high above; the barbican or 'bent gateway' (*vaṅka-dāra*) projecting out from the wall atop a causeway running across the moat, and with its perpendicularly bent axis of entrance; the open courtyard (*aṅgaṇam*) within the barbican; and the 'great city gate' (*pĕdda gavani*) at its inner end, fitted with its 'immense golden doors' (*pĕnu paiḍi-talupulu*). Moreover, the structure of this Sīsa verse, followed by a completing stanza in Teṭagīti, further underscores the sequential, experiential paradigm that organizes the description. Thus in the Sīsa proper, each of the four lines constructs a verb-less image of one part of the gateway, arranged in a progressive sequence moving inward; while the first line of the concluding Teṭagīti contains in sequence the four verbs that construe with these otherwise static visual images—'they saw, they reached, they entered, they proceeded through' (*cūcĕ, cerĕ, praveśiñcĕ, cŏcce*)—at once accounting for the appearance of these images, and linking them together through the progressive movement of the two heroes. Taken individually, each of these images may appear more or less conventional; what is unusual is

the sense of spatial coherence that results from the particular way in which they have been strung together.

The unusual spatial coherence of Vallabharāya's Warangal may set his image of the city apart from the majority of urban images occurring in classical Telugu literature, but we must be careful about the conclusions to be drawn from this quality of Vallabharāya's poetry. On the one hand, the apparent spatial coherence of the image might lead us to conclude that the image is an accurate representation of the actual city, or that it reflects the author's direct knowledge of the layout of Warangal; but neither of these conclusions proves to be justified. Indeed, if we attempt to plot a map from Vallabharāya's description, we quickly become aware of the many inconsistencies and the general quality of vagueness that actually permeate the image. In particular, attributes of size, location, and orientation are not consistently given, and when they are occasionally mentioned, they are more often specified in relative rather than in absolute terms. Details such as the statement that 'passing through that quarter, they turn north' (v.107) in fact provide little help, since we do not know which way the heroes were travelling *before* they turn north, nor *how far* they travel in this direction, nor the direction toward which they turn subsequently. Ultimately, we must recognize that Vallabharāya's description of the city serves the purposes of the poet, and not those of the geographer or archaeologist. The apparent spatial coherence of the image is only apparent, and the description possesses only the most general degree of verisimilitude. Vallabharāya's purpose is not to record objectively the entirety of the city's observable spatial form, but only to suggest the semblance of Warangal, through the form of an ambient, impressionistic urban atmosphere designed solely to contain and direct our heroes' movement.

If Vallabharāya's Warangal is to a large extent an imagined city, the fact remains that the form of this imagined city does correspond, at least in its most general outlines, with the form of the actual city. For example, the repeated references to the 'outer town' (*vĕli-pāḷĕmbu,* vv.67, 81; *bāhya-kaṭaka*, v.111) in contrast to 'Orugallu' proper (vv.112, 145, 186) or 'Orugallu Town' (*orugallu-kaṭaka*), call to mind a bi-zonal spatial

layout in general accordance with that of the actual city, with its inner circular city and its first, concentric outer enclosure. Similarly, mention of the 'Royal Avenue' (*rāja-mārgambu*, v.114) beginning just inside one of the main city gates (*pĕdda-gavani*) in the inner wall, or the 'Middle Road' (*naḍu-vīthi*) running west from the area of the city center (*paṭṭaṇamu madhya-kṣoṇi*), accords well with actual layout of the city's main axial streets, especially as these are consistently and strongly contrasted with the myriad lesser roads and lanes (*kranta-trovalu*, v.114; *āluvari-krinditrova*, v.115, etc.) that lead through the various neighbourhoods within. Given these general correspondences, one may naturally wonder what the source was for Vallabharāya's knowledge of such features.

The most likely possibility is that this information was derived from popular descriptions of the city that were in oral circulation in Vallabharāya's day. Images of famed cities form an important part of folk knowledge in any culture and are embodied in vivid descriptions that circulate even among those who have never seen the cities themselves. Typically, such accounts are largely generic in nature, but they contain just enough detail to anchor them in the reality of the particular city they describe. One is reminded of the passage in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* in which the carter describes the town of Christminster to the young Jude:

> ''Tis all learning there—nothing but learning, except religion. And that's learning too, for I never could understand it. Yes, 'tis a serious-minded place. Not but there's wenches in the streets o' nights. As for music, there's beautiful music everywhere in Chistminster. You med be religious, or you med not, but you can't help striking in your homely note with the rest. And there's a street in the place—the main street—that ha'n't another like it in the world. I should think I did know a little about Christminster! Well, 'tis oonly what has come in my way,' said the carter unboastfully. 'I've never been there, no more than you; but I've picked up the knowledge here and there, and you be welcome to it. A-getting about the world as I do, and mixing with all classes of society, one can't help hearing of things.'[9]

[9] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, with an introduction by J. Hillis Miller (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 23–4.

In similar fashion, orally transmitted accounts of Warangal—famed as 'the Andhra City' (*āndhra-nagaram*, v.43)—would have circulated all over the Andhra country, helping perpetuate the collective cultural memory of the great Kākatīya capital long after the passing of the dynasty itself.[10] The anachronistic, timeless nature of Vallabharāya's image of Warangal further underscores its indebtedness to collectively formed images in popular circulation. Vallabharāya's image of Warangal is in effect a palimpsest—juxtaposing elements from different periods, making them coexist simultaneously in a manner that is patently impossible from a historical point of view, but is common and natural in oral tradition. Thus, the greatest Kākatīya ruler, Pratāparudra, and the Sultan of Delhi who vanquished him and succeeded him, coexist as points of reference in Vallabharāya's description of Mācaladevi. The famous courtesan is on the one hand characterized as having 'won the highest respect in the assembly of scholars, presided over by the King himself, Pratāparudra (*pratāparudra-dharaṇîśopātta-goṣṭhī-pratiṣṭhā-pārīṇa* v.180), and on the other, as being 'more famous than the Delhi Sultan' (*nīku gala prasiddhi ḍhilli suratāṇikini ledu*, 185). In similar fashion, one finds at the center of the city both the soaring towers of the Svayambhū-Śiva temple—the home of the Kākatīya's tutelary divinity that was summarily destroyed in the final Tughluq conquest of Warangal in 1323—and a 'mosque of the Turks, where Allah dwells' (*kartāruḍ' uṇḍu turkala masīdu*, 149), almost certainly referring to the massively proportioned congregational mosque erected on the site of the Svayambhū-Śiva complex, almost entirely from spolia taken from the destroyed temple. Significantly, by the time Vallabharāya was writing, neither of these two structures was still standing; but both had been preserved in the collective cultural memory of the city, where they continued to live on well into the fifteenth century. [11]

[10] Indeed, the city continued to be a vital political and cultural center as it passed back and forth between the rulers of a succession of later dynasties, both Muslim and Hindu.

[11] For the mosque and its relationship with the Svayambhū-Śiva temple, see Wagoner and Rice, 'From Delhi to the Deccan'.

Why Warangal?

Having come to a better understanding of the nature of Vallabharāya's image of Warangal, we may now turn to the deeper question of why he should have chosen to set his play in this city over all others. Ultimately, it would appear that Vallabharāya's choice of Warangal was dictated by his larger, parodic purpose. As we shall see, the unique, cosmogrammatic form of the city of Warangal made it the perfect spatial vehicle for the achievement of Vallabharāya's parodic goal. Since this revolved around the concentrated, intensified depiction of his hero as a 'veritable image of the god of desire himself' (*kusuma-śarāsana-samuḍu*, 42), what was needed was a spatial arena that would provide Mañcana Śarma with every possible opportunity for the exercise of his passion.

To allow Mañcana's character to unfold successfully within the limited period of a single twenty-four hours, and within the compact literary format of a single-act *vīthi*, it was essential to place the action within a similarly concentrated spatial arena. What was needed was a setting that could provide the hero with all the situations necessary for his successful realization of that 'great third goal of man' (v.272), a setting that would enable him to encounter women of every conceivable variety, from refined courtesans to untouchable basket-weavers, in every possible situation—from polite conversations in opulent mansions to lewd and ribald exchanges with chance encounters on the street. In short, what was need-ed was 'a dense epitome of the world' (*puñjī-bhaviñcina bhuvana-goḷamu*, 112)—a phrase the author uses to describe the effect of a crowd packed within the open forecourt of one of Warangal's main gateways, but which might serve equally well to characterize the city as a whole: a teeming, intense microcosm that contains within its walls the essence of the larger world without.

Doubtless, every medieval Indian city of any size could have provided such an epitome, at least in social and cultural terms, but Warangal was unique among its contemporaries in having a distinctive urban form that gave further expression and emphasis to this microcosmic quality through spatial means. In its plan, with its concentric circular lines of fortifications and axial avenues running from the city's center to gateways

in the four cardinal directions, the form of traditional Indian cosmograms was realized with a clarity and perfection rarely seen elsewhere. Socially, Warangal may have been no different from any other medieval Indian city in presenting a dense cross-section of the larger world, but spatially, its form would have singled it out as providing an ideal arena in which the play's hero could easily move from one erotic situation to the next.

How is it that Warangal's form links the city with traditional Indic cosmograms? First, the alternating sequence of walls and moats surrounding the city's central area of towered temples and palaces assimilates it to representations of the central continent of Jambūdvīpa surrounded by its annular continents and oceans.[12] Although these surrounding continents and oceans are supposed to be seven in number, visuạl representations are often limited to Jambūdvīpa and the two innermost ring-continents, which are understood to be the only ones that are inhabited. Second, the four axial roads leading from the city center to the cardinal gateways recall the four rivers that flow from the top of Mt. Meru at the center of Jambūdvīpa through the four regions around its flanks and then enter the salt sea (*kṣāra-* or *lavaṇa-samudra*).[13] Finally, the Svayambhū-Śiva temple complex at the city's center is analogous to Mount Meru rising at the center of Jambūdvīpa, both in terms of its spatial features

[12] The cosmic significance of Warangal's plan was first suggested by George Michell (see Michell, 'City as Cosmogram'), who stressed the formal similarities between the city's layout and the abstract cosmogrammatic forms of *maṇḍalas* and *yantras*. While these similarities are clearly of importance, the purāṇic cosmographic conceptions discussed here would appear to have been of more immediate relevance to Warangal's planners. For a translation of the *Kūrma Purāṇa's* cosmographic section, see Cornelia Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen, editors and translators, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 52–5. For painted illustrations from the closely related Jain tradition, see Collette Caillat and Ravi Kumar, *The Jain Cosmology* (Basel: Ravi Kumar, 1981), especially nos. 43 and 74. For further evidence that the purāṇic cosmography sketched here was current in fourteenth-century Telangana, see the Vilasa grant of Prolaya Nāyaka (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 32, 239–68).

[13] According to the *Kūrma Purāṇa*, these four rivers—Sita, Alakanandā, Sucakṣus, and Bhadrā—all have their source in the celestial Gaṅgā that falls to earth at the center of Jambūdvīpa and circles the base of Meru.

(given its central location and the mountain-like superstructure it would have carried) and in functional terms, in that Meru, too, is supposed to have borne at its central peak a palace-temple enshrining the lord of the gods.

All of these features of Warangal's plan served as a tangible expression of the Kākatīyas' imperial aspirations as rulers who would 'unite the entire earth under the single umbrella of their dominion' (*sarva-sarvaṃ-sahan ekacchatrambugā pāliñcu*).[14] Through the geometry of its main morphological features, the city replicated the structural features of the larger cosmos over which the Kākatīyas aspired to rule. The city was thus a *yantra* or symbolic tool for the maintenance of their imperium: by keeping order within this microcosmic realm, the rulers could ritually effect the ordering of the larger world whose form it reflected.

That the cosmogrammatic aspects of Warangal's urban form were of special relevance to Vallabharāya is suggested by the way in which many of his verses further develop the cosmic symbolism that is already inherent in the built form of the city. For example, if we return to the verse describing the city gate, discussed above, and re-read it with our attention focused on the terms of comparison in these images (rather than on the material identity and spatial relationships of the physical elements described), we will notice that there is a consistent cosmological emphasis in each of the verse's poetic figures. The moat is not simply deep; it is so deep that it appears like a highway leading to the netherworld, the cosmic nadir. The city wall is not just of towering proportions, but is so high that it reaches up to the cosmic zenith in the sphere of the stars. The courtyard of the barbican is not simply crowded, but is in fact a 'dense epitome of the world.' And most tellingly, the great city gate appears like Mount Meru itself, with its two shining wings (alluding to the mythic conceit of winged mountains). If the planning of Warangal's urban form has

[14] This is the formulation of the Brahmin soothsayers when they read the horoscope of the newborn Mādhava Varman, the legendary founder of the Kākatīya dynasty according to Ekāmranātha's *Pratāparudra-caritramu* and related texts. See C.V. Ramachandra Rao, ed. *Ekāmranāthuni Pratāparudra-caritramu*, 9. An annotated translation and study of this text is currently under preparation by Cynthia Talbot and Phillip B. Wagoner.

served to abstract the features of the cosmos and condense them into a microcosmic epitome, then the particular *alaṃkāras* used in this poetic description serve to reconstitute these condensed features, reinstating their proper cosmic dimensions.

As soon as we recognize Vallabharāya's interest in emphasizing the cosmological aspects of his play's urban setting, we begin to notice other elements of the work that contribute to this end. Particularly important in this respect is Vallabharāya's skillful interweaving of the dimensions of time and space as the plot unfolds. The action of the play begins at dawn, with the two heroes outside the city and apparently in the east, as they can see and admire the 'liquid light' that pours over the rooftops of the city's mansions. They enter the neighborhoods of the outer city just as the sun is rising in the eastern sky, an 'auspicious time for beginnings.' As they wend their way westward, so, too, does the sun move on its westward course and rise higher in the sky. By noon, when 'they look up and notice that it is midday,' the heroes find themselves at the city center, where they see the towers of the Svayambhū-Śiva and Keśava temples and notice the planting of a lion standard—a venerable symbol of the sun at its zenith—in the ground at the city's center (*paṭṭaṇamu madhya-kṣoṇi*). From this point, after taking their midday meal, they continue their progress westward along the central avenue, moving toward the Brahmin quarter apparently on the westward edge of the inner city as the sun moves down toward the 'sunset mountain,' until dusk arrives and they finally attain their goal of uniting with their lovers. Through this careful linking of temporal and spatial movement during the course of the *vīthi*, the terrestrial progress of the two heroes through the city of Warangal is equated with the celestial movement of the sun as it courses along its heavenly path.

Thus far, however, the microcosmic image that emerges from these varied strategies remains on the level of an abstract structural skeleton, devoid of human content. It is only with the vivid depiction of the life buzzing in all the city's various neighborhoods that this microcosmic armature begins to be fleshed out, that the city truly begins to appear as the 'dense epitome of the world' needed by Mañcana Śarma to fulfill his erotic purpose. Here, too, it is impossible to miss Vallabharāya's

totalizing intentions, as he presents women and men (mostly the former) from various regions, castes, and occupations; deities and their residences representing every conceivable religion and sect; and cultural practices representing every level of the spectrum from elite to folk. This is sometimes accomplished by describing a particular neighborhood or quarter (the neighborhoods of the basketweavers, the farmers, the florists, the Brahmins, the prostitutes, the cooks), sometimes by concentrating on eroticized depictions of a particular individual woman (a basket weaver, a farmer's wife, an oilmonger from Mulikināḍu; Brahmin widows running food-houses, a woman from Karnataka, a Karaṇa woman 'from beyond the mountains', and of course a sampling of courtesans, who, incidentally, are the only ones in this eroticized universe to be given individual names). The city's center presents an array of different sacred foundations that is a veritable study in ecumenicism: temples of Śaiva deities from Bhairava and Vīrabhadra to the Kākatīya's own tutelary deity, Svayambhū-Śiva; a Vaishnava temple dedicated to Keśava; goddess shrines for the Great Śakti Camaḍeśvari and for Muddarāl Musānamma; a Vihāra for the god of the Buddhists; even a mosque of the Turks, 'where Allah dwells.' While these buildings around the city's central square mostly represent the refined expression of the urbanized 'Great Tradition,' there are also many shrines of smaller village and folk cults dotting the lanes and alleys under the shadow of the city wall. It is these smaller and less pretentious edifices that our heroes find far more engaging, in part because of their more colorful and earthy forms of religious expression, but also because of their greater erotic interest, given the greater involvement of women within them. The cult practices at many of these 'little shrines' are described in great detail, and Vallabharāya often highlights their origins outside the city in the local context of various regions around Andhra, from Palnad in Guntur (the cult of the Palnad heroes, vv.115–25) to Polāsa and Pĕnubāka in the outlying districts of northern Telangana (the Ekavīra temple, vv.126–34).

In short, Vallabharāya's Warangal provides Mañcana Śarma with a perfect arena in which to display his erotic prowess and to wander about as 'a veritable image of the god of desire himself.' Although it is the

individual contents of this imagined city that provide the ground for Mañcana's erotic interactions, it is the microcosmic layout of the actual city that orders these situations and provides them with their intensified significance. It is by calling forth his readers' latent image of Warangal, and then emphasizing the city's microcosmic nature through careful poetic manipulation, that Vallabharāya is able to create this 'dense epitome of the world'.

An Afterword by Phillip B. Wagoner situates the imagined Warangal of Vallabharaya in relation to the archaeologically documented Kakatiya city and its major shrines and finds, and in the historical context of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Andhra.

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Jacket: Figures from base of doorframe, **antarala** doorway, Kotagudi, Ghanpur, Warangal District, Andhra Pradesh. Courtesy AMY TRUBECK.
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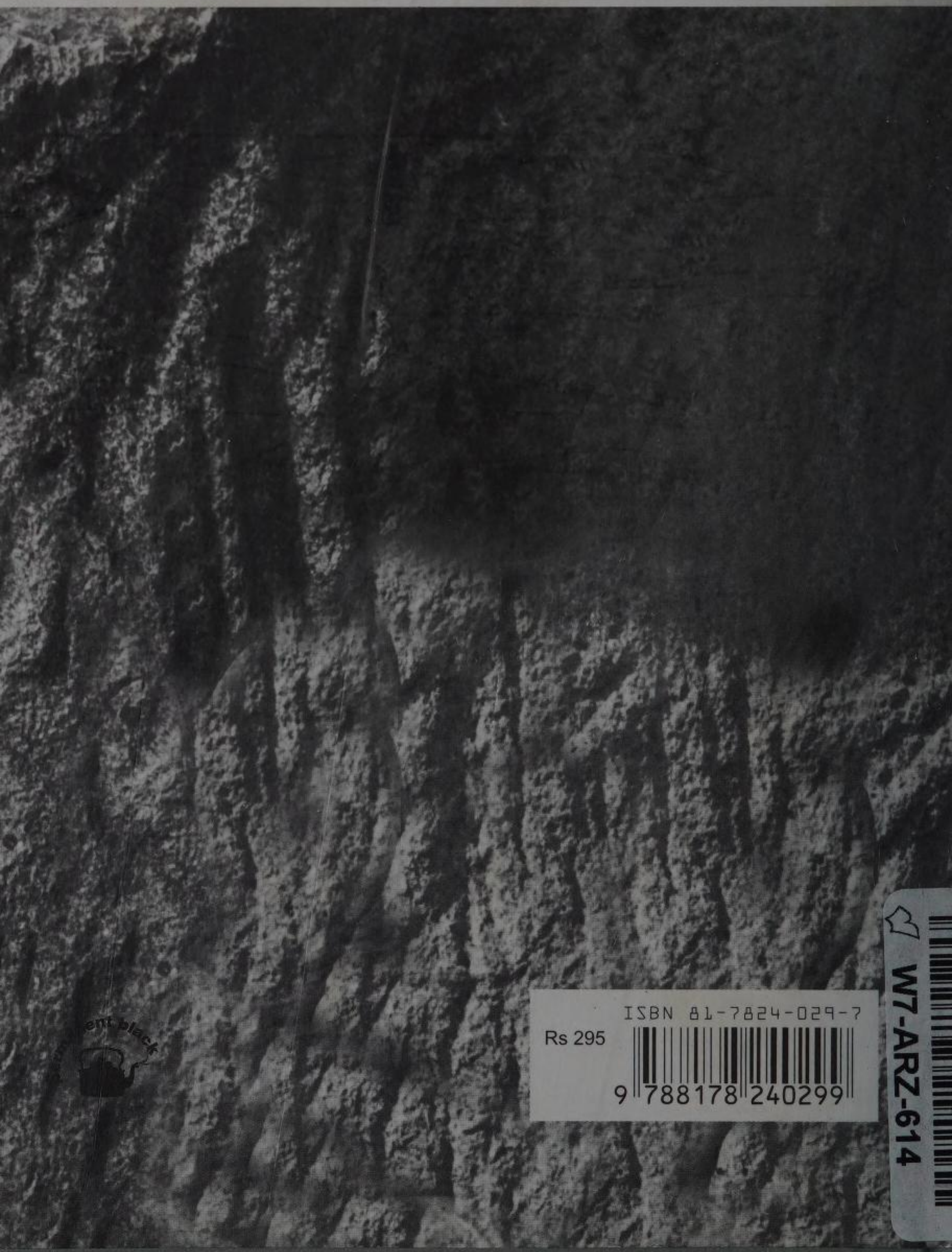
a lover's guide to Warangal

translated by
Velcheru Narayana Rao
and David Shulman



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